



Experiments in Movement Unity

GTI Forum
November 2023



Across the globe, organizations and movements are active on a full range of issues, but efforts remain fragmented. To chart a new course, we need to bring together diverse groups under a canopy of shared vision and purpose. Our recent survey of the [Global Movement Landscape](#) identifies scores of endeavors working to enhance coherence across separate struggles. This Forum introduces some of these critically important initiatives.

GREAT TRANSITION INITIATIVE

TOWARD A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION AND PRAXIS



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Global Tapestry of Alternatives: Weaving Transformative Connections

Ashish Kothari and Shrishtee Bajpai¹

The Challenge

Proactive responses to the multiple crises the world faces—ecological, socio-cultural, political, economic, spiritual—are widespread and diverse. They range from movements of resistance to the dominant ecologically destructive and socially inequitable model of “development” that has been imposed across the world, to people’s initiatives at constructing or sustaining ways of life that meet human needs and aspirations without despoiling the earth and exacerbating inequalities. They are emerging from Indigenous Peoples and other rural communities, from urban neighborhoods, from both the Global South and Global North, from both marginalized sections and the privileged elite.²

However, countertrends to the destructive processes unleashed by neoliberal, growth-at-all-costs “development,” authoritarian states, and continuing forms of patriarchy, racism, and colonialism have a mixed record. Yes, resistance movements have often won victories—stopping, delaying, or replacing oppressive regimes, or successfully defending Indigenous and community territories from extractive projects and processes. Anti-racist, feminist, peace, and decolonial movements have pushed back forces of oppression and violence in many instances. Yet many, perhaps most, such movements have fallen short of their goals, while destructive forces continue to dominate across the globe, taking the earth to the brink of survival, and subjecting many peoples and regions to war, violence, deprivation, and dispossession.

Time and time again, protest movements have placed a relatively low priority on developing strategies for systemic transformation towards structures and relations that do not replicate or approximate those being resisted. For instance, “revolutionary” parties have managed to defeat neoliberal opponents and gain control of the state in many countries. But lacking prefigurative

visions of holistic transformation grounded in practices emerging from communities, such ruling parties often revert to conventional macroeconomic and governance policies.

Many people's movements, on the other hand, are moving towards more radical, autonomous forms of governance and greater economic localization and self-reliance. In these groups, there is a resurgence of ways of life that center respect of nature (including humans), co-existence, and justice. Although such radical movements can emerge within ancient cultures or within industrial societies, all share core ethical values that put *life* (in its various forms) at the center of their practice.

Thousands of such movements and groups remain largely scattered, not yet a collective force broad and deep enough to shift the macro-picture. The most notable attempt to bring them together has been the World Social Forum, which has for two decades provided a platform for networking on action and vision. While its slogan of "Another World is Possible" pointed to a politics of hope, the WSF has remained largely a forum for amplifying critiques of the dominant neoliberal order, rather than for amplifying and consolidating constructive counter-initiatives. Seeing such a need, the Global Tapestry of Alternatives (GTA) was initiated in mid-2019 as a confluence of movements of radical transformation for collaboration, solidarity, and visioning from local to global levels.

The Opportunity

Many movements of radical transformation already exist worldwide, representing a pluriverse of worldviews and cosmologies, and exhibiting a bewildering range of practices. These include, to quote from GTA's introductory document, "sustainable and holistic agriculture, community led water/energy/food sovereignty, solidarity and sharing economies, worker control of production facilities, resource/knowledge commons, and inter-ethnic peace and harmony, to more holistic or rounded transformations such as those being attempted by the Zapatista in Chiapas and the Kurds in Rojava."³

These diverse initiatives form a veritable *pluriverse*—to paraphrase the Zapatista movement, "many worlds within a world"—in which we can discern key common threads. Such movements seek systemic, radical transformation (i.e., in the structures and relations of oppression, inequity, and unsustainability, including capitalism, statism, patriarchy, racism and anthropocentrism), not succumbing to the superficial and often counterproductive solutions of market measures and techno-fixes. It is in their shared resistance to mainstream forces and policies that these initiatives

can be called “alternatives” (though many in their own traditional contexts would be part of everyday life). These movements are based on a foundation of values and ethics, including solidarity, interconnectedness, cooperation, diversity and pluralism, autonomy, rights with responsibilities, mutual respect, equality, non-violence, and peace. The worldviews they embrace differ fundamentally from the cutthroat, competitive, selfish individualism promoted by industrial modernity and capitalism.

This pluriverse of movements and initiatives is effecting change across five spheres:⁴

- **Ecological integrity and resilience**, which includes conservation of nature and biodiversity, maintenance of ecological functions, respect for ecological limits (local to global) and the rights of nature, and ecological ethics in all human actions.
- **Social well-being and justice**, which entails facilitating the pursuit of fulfilling lives (physically, socially, culturally, and spiritually); equity between communities and individuals; communal and ethnic harmony; and erasure of hierarchies and divisions based on faith, gender, caste, class, ethnicity, ability, and other such attributes.
- **Direct and delegated democracy**, which locates critical decision-making in spaces that enable every person to participate meaningfully, then builds toward larger levels of governance by downwardly accountable institutions, and reconceptualizes political boundaries to align with ecological and cultural flows (“biocultural regions”).
- **Economic democracy**, which ensures that local communities and individuals have control over the means of production, distribution, exchange, and markets, based on the principle of localizing the provision of basic needs and nurturing the commons (as opposed to private property), and replaces GDP as an indicator of progress with meaningful measures of human and ecological well-being.
- **Cultural diversity and knowledge democracy**, which encourages multiple co-existing knowledge systems in the commons; respect for a diversity of ways of living, ideas, and ideologies; and creativity and innovation.

These spheres, of course, intersect with one another, and life is mostly lived in these intersections. Almost no initiative is achieving transformation in all spheres, but as a rough rule of thumb we can consider them an alternative if they are doing so in at least two, not seriously violating any of the other three, and considering actions in those as well.

Macro-transformation does not happen from individual initiatives acting alone: large shifts become possible when a critical mass of movements for radical resistance and constructive alternatives is able to coalesce through horizontal networks. It is not about the *replication* of successful initiatives (or simply copying from one to another, which different contexts make inappropriate), nor is it about *upscaling* (since making one initiative bigger and bigger tends to lead to bureaucracy, lack of nimbleness, and the weakening of original values), but rather about *outscaling*. In this mode, collectives and institutions learn from such initiatives, attempt transformation with modifications suited to their own contexts, and then network across geographic, cultural, and sectoral spaces to achieve scale. Such networks are grounded in place-and-interest-based collectives, with responsive and accountable larger-order institutions for coordination and amplification.

Such outscaling does not necessarily happen on its own, especially from the local to the global. Communities on the ground are often too caught up in their own struggles to find time or capacity for outscaling, and there are powerful cultural, geographic, and resource constraints with which they must contend. Larger-scale networking requires a special effort. This is where the vision of a Global Tapestry of Alternatives comes in.

Vision and Practice

The GTA was initiated in mid-2019, after several years of discussion and dialogue.⁵ The proposal received an enthusiastic welcome at exploratory sessions held at international gatherings of regional and national networks. Involving several hundred people from various backgrounds and persuasions, these discussions contributed suggestions for improving the proposed process. Mindful of how some global processes can become exclusionary and alienated from the ground, participants asserted the importance of remaining rooted in and respectful of grassroots initiatives, and inclusive of community-level actors. This requires a process that operates in multiple languages and that starts from the local, builds to wider levels, and feeds back into the local. Participants also recognized that this endeavor would be enormously challenging, perhaps overly ambitious, and

that the process of achieving non-hierarchical and truly democratic functioning is an evolving struggle. Still, a consensus emerged that the sheer necessity of such a forum meant going forward despite huge risks.

GTA engages with alternative initiatives to support mutual learning and to strengthen hope and inspiration through dialogues among diverse worldviews, ontologies, and epistemologies. It also aims to build collaborations among these initiatives to expand their scope, increase their depth, and spread their impact. Other important objectives include providing support in times of need, e.g., when any of these initiatives is threatened by state, corporate, or other attack, as well as collaborative strategizing on actions to change the macro-situation and to spread and deepen initiatives. Through its activities, GTA can stimulate horizontal weaving of networks and platforms where they do not yet exist. Finally, it aims to generate collective envisioning of alternative futures, while respecting the plurality of alternatives across the world.

GTA has expanded through an ever-growing list of *endorsers* and *weavers*. Endorsers are mostly regional or global networks and groups who affirm a commitment to the values and mission of the GTA, and with whose strategic collaboration it could expand its work. Still more important, though, are our weavers, organizational hubs that bring together radical, grounded alternatives at national or regional levels. Four weavers are in place as of early 2023, with active dialogues underway with several more networks to become weavers.⁶

A GTA Assembly was established in 2020, consisting of the core team and representatives of weavers and endorsers. It has met online every three months and will meet face-to-face in August 2023. As GTA expands in terms of geographic scope and constituents, this Assembly will have to assume an increasingly crucial role in balancing the autonomy and uniqueness of each weaver and endorser with the need for some kind of central facilitation and coordination that does not become its own power center. Recognizing that a process like this can only be held together through regular collective activities and visible outputs, the core team, in conjunction with other constituents, has organized a series of activities. This includes webinars to elevate the voices of communities showing resilience on the ground amidst the global pandemic, a bimonthly periodical called *Weaving Alternatives*, and online dialogues amongst weavers to greater understanding of struggles in different cultural and geographic contexts.⁷ It has also generated additional global networks.⁸

Through such efforts, GTA also tries to stimulate collective visioning of what a just world could look like and how we can get there. We have many questions to explore. What is the relationship between humans and the rest of nature where the latter also has agency? Within humanity, what is the relationship between current and future generations? How does one both challenge the political boundaries of nation-states that divide natural and cultural flows, indeed even challenge the state itself, while also dealing with the need to make current states accountable and responsive? What visions and strategies of change are most urgently needed and effective, from grassroots prefiguration to resistance? What is the relationship between grounded, local action where humans find meaning, and the global transformations necessary to push back and transform macro-economic and political forces? What could a global governance system look like that is responsive and accountable to communities and nature? How can local place-based identities (ethnic, cultural, national) relate to wider, even global identities (as humans, earth citizens, living beings)? How do real and perceived “trade-offs” get resolved, such as between urgent ecological concerns and the livelihoods of workers in “dirty” industries? While many of us in the GTA process have our own understandings and ideas about these and other crucial questions, we do not see ourselves as providing preconceived answers, but rather as offering a process in which the answers emerge collectively.

Such a local-to-global synthesis is obviously not easy, given the challenges of different ideologies, languages, cultures, and capacities. But if we get the *process* right, and spend time building trust and understanding, we have a fighting chance of emerging with something useful and potentially transformative. We are also clear that such a process must be built from within the Global South, with sensitive partnership of the Global North, reversing the kind of domination often seen even in alternative spaces.

The Future of GTA?

It is important that the GTA does not become institutionalized in ways that create bureaucratic, centralized structures of decision-making; it needs to remain an open-ended process, and an open platform, an identity that many can “own” and run with. While, at the start, there is a need for a core team to hold the process together and stimulate more connections and weaving, our hope is that eventually no central structure would be needed, that the weaving would happen in a distributed

way. This is a tall order in a world where humans have almost forgotten to live without centralized command and control, but it is by no means impossible.

We do not underestimate the enormous challenges a process like GTA faces. Not only are we up against the most powerful political and economic forces in history, but also against the very human frailties of territoriality, ego, and narrow-mindedness that inhibit collaboration. We must also work to encourage and sustain a sense of common purpose while respecting the plurality of GTA's constituents and affiliates. Our weavers are engaging in an ongoing dialogue to create a synthesis document on diagnosis and prognosis, common threads that can bind us together, differences we can mutually respect, and shared criteria to define radical alternatives. If collectively held through horizontal weaving, this can create a vision, not imposed from above as happens in a conventional party or organization, but which binds us together from below for coordinated global action.

We also realize that there is no end point in the movement towards a Great Transition; it will likely always be a work in progress as new issues come up, or old ones resurface. How can the process be nimble and reflective enough for such evolution to always take place, and to take place in a just manner? As it evolves, questions of power, democracy, production, exchange, consumption, individual-community relationships, and other such issues will also keep arising in search of resolutions that are relevant at least for the time. Its own internal dynamics, as it grows bigger and more complex, will require constant innovation and gentle facilitation. Can a platform like GTA, with other global platforms in collaborative spaces, help in reaching such resolutions through the processes mentioned above, especially the combination of visioning and practice, and the promotion of prefigurative and transfigurative politics? That is the hope, and the invitation.

Endnotes

1. With inputs from Christine Dann, Amy Lee, Franco Augusto, Ana Cecilia Dinerstein, Xochitl Leyva, Alex Jensen, and Carlos Tornel.
2. “Global North” includes privileged and powerful sections in the geographical South; conversely, “Global South” includes oppressed and marginalized peoples in the geographical North.
3. See <https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/introduction>. Scores of alternative worldviews and practices are reported in Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria, and Alberto Acosta, eds., *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (Delhi: Tulika Books, 2019); see, also, <https://radicalecologicaldemocracy.org>.
4. These spheres are drawn from the “Flower of Transformation” framework of the Vikalp Sangam (Alternatives Confluence) process in India; see <https://vikalpsangam.org/about/the-search-for-alternatives-key-aspects-and-principles/>.
5. This idea was first proposed at “Global Alternatives Confluence” in 2016 at the International Degrowth Conference in Budapest. Its inspirations were Vikalp Sangam (Alternatives Confluence) in India, the burgeoning degrowth and commons networks in Europe, platforms in the Americas such as Crianza Mutua, and strands of the World Social Forum focusing on transformation.
6. For a full list of weavers, see <https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/weavers:index>.
7. These can be found at <https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org>.
8. One, Adelante (<https://adelante.global>), is a platform of eight global networks and platforms including constituents of World Social Forum, Global Green New Deal, and Progressive International, to synergize their activities and create more cross-learning. Another, PeDAGoG (<https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/pedagog>), is a forum for academics and activists working at “higher” education levels to share courses, pedagogies, and approaches that are alternatives to mainstream education.

About the Authors



Ashish Kothari is on the core team of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, and a coordinator of Vikalp Sangam in India. He has taught at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, coordinated India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan process, and served on the boards of Greenpeace International and Greenpeace India. He is co-author of *Churning the Earth: Making of Global India* and co-editor of *Alternative Futures: India Unshackled* and *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*.



Shrishtee Bajpai is a member of the core team of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, a coordinator of Vikalp Sangam in India, and a researcher on alternatives to development. She serves on the executive committee of Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature.



Panel



ICCA Consortium: Indigenous Peoples' Territories of Life

Neema Pathak Broome

Background

Indigenous peoples (IP) and local communities (LC) across the globe have faced colonization and extractive exploitation of their lands, waters, and territories to feed the imperial and capitalist powers. In most countries of Asia, Africa, and South America, the postcolonial national governments have continued the colonial practices of land and resource appropriation, for commercial exploitation on the one hand and fortress conservation on the other, by dispossession and non-recognition of IPs' and LCs' rights, ways of being, and worldviews. Whatever territories, lands, and waters that remain occupied or used by IPs and LCs, however, continue to encompass significant biodiversity and wildlife and are known to be protecting 80% of the global biodiversity. Their contribution to biodiversity conservation and climate action remains ignored, and they face greater than ever threats from national policies and practices of biodiversity conservation and prevalent practice of corporate-controlled growth, development, and modernization. This is the backdrop of emergence and mission of the [ICCA Consortium](#).

Emergence of a Global Movement

Globally, conventional conservation practices and policies with their colonial roots remain heavily influenced by large international conservation organizations and conventions. In 1994, one of the founding members of the Consortium after becoming the head of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation and Nature) Social Policy Programme formed a Working Group on Collaborative Management of Protected Areas as a step towards inclusion of IPs and LCs. The Working Group pushed for development and adoption of the IUCN programmatic recommendation on Collaborative Management for Conservation along with some recommendations on IP rights and

the need to defend IPs from industrial and mining developments. This seemingly small opening was a big breakthrough within a traditional conservation organization with many governments and conservative conservation organizations as its members.

Those pushing for these approaches, however, had to pay a price for being “too socially minded and radical” and were pushed out of their institutions. These key actors came together to form a loose network and began to connect with others in different parts of the world. Because of their network-building and outreach, the conservation narratives gradually began to shift from exclusively state-led fortress conservation to collaborative and shared systems of conservation and eventually to IPs’ and LCs’ own systems of conservation, including through self-rule and self-determination. The term Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) began to gain recognition and visibility in the global conservation discourses (which over time changed to ICCAs—Areas and Territories conserved by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, and to current ICCAs—territories of life).

ICCA Consortium

In 2010, after much internal reflections and discussions, it became evident that sustaining this momentum and providing meaningful support to the struggles of ICCAs would require some level of formalization and institutional and financial support. [ICCA Consortium](#) was thus created.

By the end of 2022, ICCA Consortium had 217 members and 474 honorary members spread across 86 countries. Among the greatest challenges for an association like ICCA Consortium is to strike the right balance to achieve some form of formal institutionalization yet retain the characteristics of a movement. While the former is essential to ensure structured, better coordinated, financially strengthened and sustained support to members, the latter is essential for decentralized decision-making and functioning with flexibility, adaptability, informality, consensus building, transparency, inclusivity, and mutual sharing of responsibility and accountability at all levels and spheres.

The Consortium is currently strengthening its regionalization processes. Members and honorary members in each of the six identified regions are self-organizing, and some are holding regional/

national assemblies. Regionalization processes vary from region to region, ranging from well-structured and formal to informal collaborations. All regions, however, do have regional/national strategies, agendas, procedures, and modalities. As with the Consortium's global General Assembly, regional assemblies make decisions by consensus, through regular open and inclusive discussions largely online and sometimes in person. Such assemblies are an opportunity for members and honorary members to discuss and share current work and challenges and to co-design and identify priorities and plans for the region. Regional assemblies have been crucial for enhancing mutual learning exchanges on a variety of issues, extending mutual support and solidarity, collectively strategizing, fundraising, and resource-sharing.

Achievements

As the global ecological and climate crisis deepens, there has also been an increasing realization that support and recognition to IPs and LCs, their worldviews, bio-cultural governance, and knowledge systems can help us arrive at transformative pathways to address global crises. The Consortium as a collective and its members in their own capacities have been among the key actors in facilitating this changed understanding. ICCA Consortium has emerged as an important actor in global and regional discourses, agreements, conventions, and processes related to conservation, continuing to play a critical role in shifting conventional conservation policies and practice towards greater equity, justice, and inclusivity.

Simultaneously, the goal has also been to bring greater support and visibility to conservation and climate contributions of the IPs and LCs, their self-determination and self-strengthening processes and struggles to defending their territories against extractivism. This has been achieved through regular publications and policy briefs; supporting local, national, and regional documentation processes; facilitating regular interactions among the members on global policy discourses and finance mechanism; facilitating direct participation of the IPs and LCs from ICCAs in various global and regional negotiations and dialogues; peer learning exchanges; support for self-strengthening and self-sustaining processes to overcome internal challenges; among others. Consortium members and secretariats at national, regional, and global levels also work on building deeper collaborative partnerships with bilateral and multilateral organizations, such as UNDP's small grants program towards greater support to ICCAs, and dialogues with large conservation organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund, whose policies directly or indirectly impact the ICCAs.

Challenges

As is expected, an association like the Consortium would constantly face internal and external challenges. The internal challenges relate to being able to maintain internal equity, accountability, transparency, and power balances. The Consortium has already grown multiple times in its financial outlay and secretariat strength over the one decade of its formal existence. Achieving a certain scale of operation, efficacy, and support and yet being able to avoid concentration of power requires constant vigilance, reflection, and action at all levels. Most decision-making functions within the Consortium rely heavily on voluntary contribution of time and effort from those who are often also engaged in deep grassroots action. It can be challenging sometimes to seek accountability for voluntary commitments, particularly when actors are already overcommitted.

While the Consortium has contributed towards significant gains at the international policy level, translating these policies at the national level has been a huge challenge. Nationally, ICCAs in many regions are facing pushback from the state agencies, as large conservation organizations and state wildlife departments continue to push for fortress conservation, leading to large-scale human rights violations and internal displacement. Provisions of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent are largely violated. The trend to co-opt language of inclusion, equity, and justice in the policy statements, while actual implementation regressing on these values in the worst case or maintaining business as usual in the best, is increasing.

Finally, the enormity of what IPs and LCs are up against cannot be over emphasized: deep entrenched structural power imbalances and injustices, an ever-increasing growth-based extractive model, and rapid internal socio-cultural changes; centralized powers in the hands of authoritarian and corporate-led or controlled governments, gagging media, criminalizing dissent, and squeezing spaces for resistance and financial support; geopolitical conflicts and wars between nation-states.

In conclusion, there are internal reflections and discussions within the Consortium on how to extend support to IPs and LCs in these situations and precipitate the larger global transformative change. In 2023, the Consortium has finalized and adopted a [manifesto](#) as a working document to keep learning, reflecting, and acting towards a constantly evolving response to the global crisis.

About the Author



Neema Pathak Broome is the coordinator of the Conservation and Livelihoods program at Kalpavriksh and the South Asia coordinator for the ICCA Consortium, a global movement on Areas and Territories Conserved by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. Her work includes researching, documenting, understanding, facilitating, and advocating for processes towards decentralized, equitable, diverse, and context-specific forms of conservation governance, especially decolonized and alternative forms of conservation within and outside government designated protected areas.



SCORAI: Advancing Sustainable Consumption

Halina Brown

In the first decade of the new millennium, some academics were increasingly questioning the leading assumption that technological innovation will solve the problem of unsustainability by changing the dominant sociotechnical regimes. In Europe, project SCOREI, funded by the European Union, reflected these voices. It actively brought together—through conferences and workshops—researchers and practitioners in social sciences and technologic innovation studies to jointly explore ways to reduce consumption in affluent countries as a path toward sustainability. These novel interdisciplinary interactions were intellectually magnetic. Nothing like that existed in the US or Canada.

The idea of creating a similar knowledge network, with emphasis on societal institutions, was born in 2008 through discussions at weekly Tellus Institute lunch seminars. Four individuals—three academics and one senior member of Tellus Institute—led the effort. Most researchers and practitioners in North America had little opportunity to connect to or collaborate with each other, especially outside their own professional associations. [SCORAI](#) (Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative) sought to create a new intellectual community as “an international knowledge network of researchers and practitioners committed to building a flourishing and ecologically-sound society by changing the way we consume,” as its mission statement explains.

In 2009, we convened an inaugural two-day workshop at Clark University, the home of two of the founders. To our delighted surprise, most invitees (about forty) came, some from as far as Vancouver, and presented papers, even though we could offer no funding for travel, accommodation, or dinners. SCORAI was clearly meeting an unfulfilled need. The workshop’s conclusion—which we [published](#)—was that consumption is not individual but a collective process and should be studied as such. We also recognized the need to create a coherent body

of theoretical and empirical knowledge on how consumer society functions and maintains itself, and where the leverage points for social change might exist. None of us could tell at that point how far into interdisciplinarity such an exploration would take us.

The Clark workshop was followed in 2011 by a larger workshop in Princeton, New Jersey, which specifically focused on three separate areas of research: social practice and institutional theories, sociotechnical system transformation, and the new economy. About sixty people attended, both North American and European. This workshop led to a book. We also continued meeting at Tellus lunches, with various invited speakers, to explore topics of interest.

At that point, the SCORAI community was growing largely through the intellectual entrepreneurship of the founders and word of mouth, and principally among the Europeans and North Americans in academia, research institutes, and (less so) in government. By 2013, we were sufficiently confident to host an international conference at Clark University, with modest seed funding from the hosting institution. The invited keynote speakers included a historian, a human happiness economist, a former Wall Street tycoon turned anti-corporate advocate, a consumer scholar, and others. After that conference, we received a substantial grant from Rasmussen Foundation to “continue doing what you have been doing.” This allowed us to become a more visible organization: we created a listserv and a webpage, and created a book series at [Routledge on Sustainable Consumption](#) (with eleven titles so far). We also organized a very visible seminar series at Tellus with invited celebrity speakers from various fields of knowledge and research, each of whom was asked to talk about their discipline’s theory of social change. We also became independent from Tellus Institute, which until then provided us with fiscal management and administrative services.

The interactive listserv and a newsletter propelled SCORAI’s growth in numbers and reach. Several other workshops and conferences (in Maine, Copenhagen, and Boston-Stockholm) followed. The 2012 Rio+20 gathering in Rio de Janeiro gave rise to a SCORAI node in Brazil. Other nodes emerged in China and Israel, and a sister organization SCORAI-Europe was created. Voices from India, Japan, Mexico, Uruguay, Hong Kong, Poland, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, and other regions

joined the discussions on the listserv. The SCORAI Board became international as well. In July 2023, we convened the fifth international conference, this time in the Netherlands, with several hundred people participating. We also changed our name at that point to SCORAI-Global.

Since SCORAI's founding, the topic of sustainable lifestyles and consumption has gained traction among academics and policymakers, and numerous knowledge networks, think tanks, commissions, institutes, and endowed chairs have emerged with a similar focus, primarily in Europe because of the generous EU funding. I dare say that SCORAI has made a significant contribution to this expansion and mainstreaming. We also made connections, generally through the professional entrepreneurship of the Board members, with the Next System Project, the Degrowth movement, C40, the Urban Sustainability Directors Network in the US and Canada, the KR Foundation, and European Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

But the gap between research and action is not easily closed, and growth has consequences (at the time of this writing SCORAI has 130 subscribers to the listserv and 1500 to the bi-monthly Newsletter). SCORAI's younger members are passionate about the need to push for radical societal change, including the economic system and power relations, but the demands of academic life interfere with combining scholarship with activism. With the growth of the sustainable consumption research community, early career academics are studying smaller and smaller slivers of the big picture, and do not necessarily fully grasp where their work fits in that picture. That, in turn, has diminishing interest for activists and practitioners.

SCORAI is undoubtedly successful on several counts: as an organization that promotes research; as a creator of an intellectual community; and as influencer of policy agendas; one of the key authors who put consumption and lifestyles prominently in the Sixth IPCC report is an active SCORAI member. We also contributed to the emergent understanding of how consumer society functions and maintains itself, and how it impacts human and non-human well-being. SCORAI has not yet sparked a social movement, but the awareness of the impacts of our lifestyles is rising.

I thank my collaborator Prof. Philip Vergragt for his contributions to this essay.

About the Author



Halina Brown is Associate Fellow at the Tellus Institute, Professor Emerita of Environmental Science and Policy at Clark University, and chair of the Citizens Commission on Energy in Newton, Massachusetts. Her scholarly research has included environmental risk assessment, national and international environmental policy, corporate environmental management, the institutionalization of sustainability reporting, socio-technical transitions, and sustainable consumption. She has served as a chief toxicologist at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and a visiting professor at several universities. She is a co-founder of the Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative (SCORAI) and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the International Society for Risk Analysis. She holds a PhD in chemistry from New York University in 1976.



UN Parliamentary Assembly Campaign: Toward Global Democracy

Andreas Bummel

In the 2016 book [Journey to Earthland](#), Paul Raskin imagines a scenario in which after phases of crisis and emergency, an “Earthland Parliamentary Assembly” adopts a world constitution in 2048 that brings a “Commonwealth of Earthland” into being. This is in line with the vision of a world parliament that was first expressed at the time of the French Revolution and has been pursued ever since by a diverse group of thinkers and activists, as Jo Leinen and I described in our 2018 book [A World Parliament](#), an expanded and updated second edition of which is now in the works.

In 2007, the [campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly](#) (UNPA) was established to provide for a common platform and facilitate a common strategy of all those advocating for this goal. This body will be a first step towards the long-term goal of an elected global parliament, and of course, it is only one of many puzzle pieces in the Great Transition, one that pursues the emergence of democratic global representation of the world’s citizens. The campaign, which has been endorsed by a variety of groups and institutions as well as thousands of individuals, among them more than 1,800 current and former members of parliament from over 130 countries, is ongoing and it is now part of a broader platform—the [“We The Peoples” campaign](#) for inclusive global governance that also advocates for a World Citizens Initiative (UNWCI) as a global participatory instrument and a UN Civil Society Envoy as a tool to enhance civil society involvement at the UN. This campaign, launched in 2021, has been endorsed by a diverse group of over 200 civil society organizations, networks, and alliances, from small rural initiatives to some of the largest NGOs in the world.

Recently, a UNPA and UNWCI have been endorsed in the "[Interim People's Pact for the Future](#)" that emanates from the Global Futures Forum in May 2023, organized by the Coalition for the UN We Need, a network that aims to enhance civil society impacts on reforming and strengthening the UN. We are trying to make progress in light of the UN's upcoming so-called "Summit of the Future" scheduled for September 2024.

The current political climate is characterized by rising global tensions, in particular in connection with the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and a Russian-Chinese authoritarian axis that has been attempting to undermine democracy worldwide. In this situation, achieving any meaningful change at the UN is even more difficult than it usually is. Autocratic countries have no interest in increasing civic space at the UN or anywhere else. They are doing the opposite.

Despite high-flying rhetoric that speaks of the need to establish "people-centered multilateralism" or a "new global social contract," the UN and democratic states so far still haven't seriously considered meaningful steps to advance citizen participation and representation at the UN. In principle, the "Summit of the Future" would be a golden opportunity to do so.

Polls indicate that public opinion in many countries would back moves in this direction. For instance, a recent [survey](#) found that public sentiment in 13 of 15 countries covered strongly approves of the creation of a world parliament that "would be part of a global legislative system that under certain circumstances would pass legally binding laws to govern the world as a whole." On average, 60% of respondents leaned towards support while only 22% tended to oppose the proposal. It gives hope that citizens are often significantly ahead of their governments.

About the Author



Andreas Bummel is co-founder and Executive Director of Democracy Without Borders, an international civil society group promoting global democratic governance. He coordinates the Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, which advocates democratic representation of the world's citizens at the UN and has been endorsed by 1,500 sitting and former lawmakers from over 100 countries. He is co-author of *A World Parliament: Governance and Democracy in the 21st Century* and *A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly: A Policy Review of Democracy Without Borders*.



Degrowth Collective: Limits and Opportunities

Vlad Bunea

The Situation

Are we lacking [good alternatives](#) to the status quo, alternatives that actually work and bring about a much-desired fundamental transformation to our economic and social order?¹ Or do we have too many, and we are overwhelmed by their number, and we wander about, confused about how to establish a hierarchy of their importance? Why are so many anti-hegemonic organizations scattered in ideological clusters, and strategic hermetic Schrödinger-like boxes with probabilistic cats inside? Or perhaps the above is an incorrect perception of a much more hopeful reality, in which we are on the threshold of a major transformation of the status quo? We can daydream that if we only keep pushing and doing the things we are already doing, we will see a great revival of the human spirit; we will see humanity come to its senses and come back into planetary boundaries; we will see a massive expansion of social justice within the North and within the South, between rich and poor, with social classes and inequalities dissolved and all humans emancipated.

There is no shortage of clever assessments of why we are in this predicament, and what the path forward may be. And perhaps the strength of our struggles lies within our diversity and the pluriverse of ideas and solutions. There is something that binds us, fundamentally. And that is our material condition on Earth. We share the planet with its ecological boundaries. Nature knows no political borders.

We had the Occupy Wall Street movement. What happened with it? Why did it not bring down the status quo? Were they too disorganized, or lacking clear demands? Today, we have Extinction Rebellion, Fridays for Future, the Sunrise Movement, Just Stop Oil, and countless more actors.

They continue with the blocking of streets, and with the shaming of Big Oil. These activities inconvenience some humans on their way to work, but gather tens of thousands of likes (and hates) on social media. Objectively, that may well qualify as a good thing in the eyes of an AI-enhanced historian from the year 2100. All these movements have barely made a dent into capitalism, including the resurgence of the labor strikes in the United States and the continuous social agitation in France and elsewhere. Capital is just too damned powerful to be taken down, because it is extremely well codified into law, tradition, and culture.² Yet hope is brewing, and it lingers.

It seems that environmental movements, labor movements, and indigenous rights movements are all after the same common enemy, namely capital. In their struggle, these movements have sometimes clashed with each other: climate activists blocking access to mines for workers who have to put bread on the table for their families, drivers honking at indigenous water protectors trying to boycott precious pipelines, and more. What prevents all these movements and organizations from realizing they have a common enemy?

Degrowth Collective and Grassroots Formation

In order to bring humanity back into planetary boundaries, we need massive degrowth in the Global North, and just growth in the Global South. It is about averages, statistical distributions of climate risks and social risks, and historical responsibility for the climate crisis which lies overwhelmingly with the rich countries of the North, but also with the rich capitalist class in the South.

What should we do then? Jane McAlevey called the climate strike goals “brilliant and... uncompromising.” She also argued that “to halt and reverse the carbon economy...requires far more power and a serious strategy.”³

[Degrowth Collective](#) is an international organization that is focused on grassroots formation, while being mindful of the need for a holistic approach. DC is attempting to learn from the shortcomings of the past and present. Environmental, labor, and indigenous movements must unite in order to bring about a society focused on the well-being of nature and humans, and not just corporate profits. One of the aims of the Degrowth Collective is to subvert capital at its core: at the point of production. The single best method to slow down the flow of material and energy throughput

that is required to stabilize humanity within planetary boundaries is with **Global General Strikes**. Workers still hold the power of shutting down production. Environmental and indigenous groups do not have this power, in spite of their historical attempts.

Educating workers that an ecological lifestyle is very well aligned with their interests and their well-being is a powerful strategy that deserves much consideration. DC and all like-minded groups can reach out to unions and workers, listen to them first, talk to them as equals, and find common narratives. There are fundamental common interests between workers and climate activists. It is only a matter of time until they both realize this on a large scale.

There are [plenty of policies](#) from the degrowth movement, with no shortage of technical papers and radical proposals, such as maximum income, work-time reduction, and economic democracy. All of these can be put on the table and fine-tuned, when talking to workers, and strategizing on how to raise demands.

Degrowth Collective is building power from the grassroots level. There are no bosses or presidents. Members do not tell each other what to do, but rather action evolves organically from self-accountability and careful attention to each other's stories. Its [governance](#) is decentralized. Its aims are collectively determined. Its local groups are both autonomous, adapted to local conditions, and linked with the international network at the same time. Internationalism and local independence of groups are not disjunctive concepts. Groups can be linked in an international network to work together on global goals, while at the same time they can remain independent to address the needs of their local communities. And once we all realize that our common enemy is capital, and our common goal is a fair consumption space for all humans within planetary boundaries, we can move to strike and slow down the status quo, transform society, and create well-being for all.

The Larger Landscape of the Degrowth Movement

The wider degrowth movement, which advocates for a radical transformation of society and consumption patterns for the sake of life, well-being and autonomy, met in a hybrid format for the fourth time on August 28, 2023.⁴ Activists, academics, and practitioners approved the creation of the International Degrowth Network (IDN), the coming together of autonomous degrowth groups from around the world. Within IDN, several working groups are in the process of being formalized

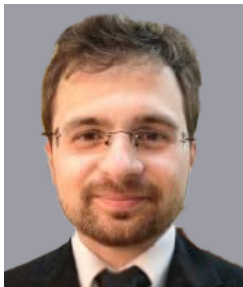
to compartmentalize work by area of responsibility: organizing, communications, outreach, research, activism, events, and geographical networking. A wide palette of theories of change are being explored for effectiveness, from top-down relentless policy advocacy, to bottom-up hard civil resistance, and culture formation such as promoting lifestyles of voluntary simplicity. Degrowth Collective, like many other degrowth groups, will be linked to IDN via sociocratic methods, while maintaining independent governance, and will focus on the formation of local degrowth chapters around the world.⁵

The working philosophy of Degrowth Collective is of *careful nimbleness*, which spans from flexibility of governance to adapting to local conditions. Specifically, if certain regions are heavily under-unionized, then the call for a general strike may come across as an echo in the desert. Who is going to strike? Or if certain places are reasonably unionized, are they going to strike while being mindful of the need for degrowth? When does civil disobedience come into the picture? If nothing else works in a certain place, when is more appropriate to quit capitalism altogether to start an ecovillage, and live life in line with voluntary simplicity?⁶ These are some of the burning questions that frame the work of Degrowth Collective. In a year's time, both DC and IDN will be in a better position to report on their progress.

Endnotes

1. I do not speak on behalf of members of Degrowth Collective, in this article. I wish to thank DC member Aron Glazer for providing copy-editing on an early draft.
2. Katharina Pistor, *The Code of Capital: How the Law Creates Wealth and Inequality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).
3. Jane McAlevey, *A Collective Bargain: Unions, Organizing, and the Fight for Democracy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2021).
4. See <https://degrowth.info/en/blog/the-birth-of-the-international-degrowth-network>.
5. Database with degrowthers (groups, people, policies, papers, media, books, news, education, conferences, assemblies): https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18Z7kTs0smhOU9S3DyGNJ_MBOeu3XKW2qdx3unOE6l/edit?pli=1#gid=0.
6. Samuel Alexander, *Voluntary Simplicity: The Poetic Alternative to Consumer Culture* (Whanganui, New Zealand: Stead & Daughters Ltd, 2009) See also: <https://simplicityinstitute.org/> and <https://samuelalexander.info/>.

About the Author



Vlad Bunea is an economist, author, educator, and an organizer at the Degrowth Collective. His books include *The Urban Dictionary of Very Late Capitalism* and *The Intimate Diary of Pope Francis the Second*.



Simpol: Simultaneous Transnational Policy

John Bunzl

[Simpol](#) is a global citizens' initiative that develops the necessary policies to solve global problems, and its supporters use their votes to drive governments to act together to implement them.

The main barrier to solving global problems is that no government can move first or act alone because doing so would make its national economy uncompetitive, risking unemployment, capital flight, and economic decline. As former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair said, "The blunt reality of the politics of climate change is that no country will be willing to sacrifice its economy in order to address this challenge."¹ This remains true for all global problems. In a globalized economy, it will always be so. Governments are therefore caught in a "Prisoner's Dilemma." It's not that they don't *want* to solve global problems, but that they *can't*. That, indeed, is why the wider movement has achieved little: because it demands change from those—i.e., governments—who are incapable of delivering it.

That is why Simpol's condition of *simultaneous* implementation is vital: it breaks this vicious cycle, eliminates the risk of uncompetitiveness, and resolves the dilemma. If sufficient nations act together simultaneously, no nation loses out—everyone wins.

Simpol operates in two stages:

A. Politicians and governments are invited to support Simpol only in principle by signing a Pledge to implement its policies simultaneously, subject to all or sufficient nations participating, and subject to the policies eventually being agreed.

B. Once sufficient nations have signed, an international negotiation to define and agree on detailed policies can proceed, followed by implementation.

Simpol also incorporates these key features:

1. Multi-issue policy packages

Simpol would consist of a series of multi-issue policy packages so that what a nation loses on one issue, it can gain on another. The losers on a climate agreement, for example, could be compensated by revenues from a currency transactions tax, thereby making immediate action in every nation's *self-interest*. And if the agreement is in everyone's interests, so will be the inclusion of verification and enforcement measures. Simpola does *not* necessarily mean all nations implementing precisely the same measures. Rather, policies could be tailored to suit the needs and abilities of each nation. National sovereignty remains protected, because only policies requiring simultaneous implementation are included.

2. Citizens and NGOs develop the policies AND citizens use their votes to drive governments to implement them

By joining the campaign, citizens declare that they will "give strong voting preference at national elections to politicians or parties that have signed the Pledge." As the voting bloc of Simpola supporters grows, politicians who sign increase their chances of gaining those votes. Those who don't, risk losing those votes, and potentially their seats, to politicians who signed instead. In that way, Simpola does not need a majority of voters to succeed—only the critical balance between the two main competing parties. This is the unique tool that Simpola uses, and it is vital because, as NGOs should by now realize, politicians can easily ignore petitions and protests, but they cannot ignore votes.

This political power also gives Simpola's supporters strong influence over its policy content. To remain electorally attractive to our supporters, politicians and parties will have little choice but to adopt the global policies our supporters prefer. Global justice NGOs can also play their part by providing expert policy input to Simpola and by encouraging their supporters to join the campaign.

Should Simpol gain the support of democratic governments, non-democratic nations would be invited to participate. They need solutions to global problems too. If global support becomes sufficient and a global negotiation is successful, the first Simultaneous Policy can be implemented. Subsequent Simultaneous Policies can then follow.²

Progress So Far

Simpol is active in a number of countries, especially during elections. The campaign is most developed in the UK, where over 100 Members of Parliament have signed the Pledge. They come from all the main UK political parties. A considerable number of MPs have also signed in Germany, Ireland, and the European Parliament.³

Many politicians sign because of the strong electoral pressure Simpol exerts. In highly contested electoral districts, this often creates a “domino effect”: once one candidate signs, competitors are forced to follow so that, whoever wins the seat, Simpol is sure to gain another pledged MP. Others sign simply because they see Simpol as common sense.

Building Movement Coherence

Simpol is designed as a tool to network the wider movement for solving global problems. To achieve this, we suggest that each initiative in the wider movement make a list of all its policy demands. Then it should subject each demand to the following test:

Would the unilateral implementation of the demand by a single government, or by a restricted group of governments (e.g., the EU), be likely to cause it a significant competitive disadvantage?

If the answer is NO, then unilateral implementation is viable and the NGO can pursue that demand in the usual way. If the answer is YES, then that demand requires simultaneous implementation and should be pursued in cooperation with Simpol. By differentiating demands in this way, we would immediately create movement coherence because NGOs would then be using the right campaigning tool for the right job.

Fully understanding Simpol's potential requires a deeper change in our thinking—a move from *nation*-centric to *world*-centric thinking. The psychological steps required to make that change are set out in the book *The Simpol Solution*, which I co-authored with psychotherapist Nick Duffel.⁴ As Noam Chomsky commented, “It’s ambitious and provocative. Can it work? Certainly worth a serious try.”

Endnotes

1. David Adam, “Blair Signals Shift over Climate Change,” *The Guardian*, November 2, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2005/nov/02/greenpolitics.frontpagenews>.
2. For details on the campaign, its policy development, and implementation, please see https://simpol.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policies/Simpol_-_Information_Pack.pdf.
3. A list of all current pledged MPs is available at <https://simpol.org/who-we-are/pledged-politicians>.
4. John Bunzl and Nick Duffel, *The Simpol Solution* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2018), <https://simpol.org/who-we-are/simpol-the-book>.

About the Author



John Bunzl is a global political activist and businessman. In 2000, he founded the Simultaneous Policy (Simpol) campaign, a way for citizens to use their votes to drive politicians towards global cooperation. It has supporters in over 100 countries and enjoys the support of a growing number of Members of Parliament around the world. His authored and co-authored books include *The Simpol Solution*, *Monetary Reform – Making it Happen!*, *People-Centred Global Governance – Making it Happen!*, and *Global Domestic Politics*. He has published numerous articles on global governance in the *Journal of Integral Theory & Practice*. He has lectured widely, including to the Schumacher Society, the World Trade Organisation, the Lucis Trust, and various universities.



Earth Charter International: From Document to Movement

Sam Crowell

I was just standing alongside the Winooski River in Vermont observing the unimaginable force of rushing water that had previously devastated towns and communities along its path. The rising water level felt menacing, and yet people were gathered along its banks looking in awe at the river's unbounded power and unstoppable momentum. This sense of awe is often experienced as both fear and amazement. In such moments, something within us responds with great humility, and we are at least momentarily put in our place as the natural world announces itself with a voice that cannot be dismissed.

As I watched the fluid motion and power of the river, I could not help but think of the idea of "movement," as I had just read the provocative [opening essay](#) by Kothari and Bajpai. Just as the multitude of creeks and streams flow into the river and move in a common direction, the Global Tapestry of Alternatives seeks to bring together a pluriverse of possibilities from disparate places, themes, solutions, and ideas. Inspiring indeed!

In my case, I have been involved with the [Earth Charter](#) (EC) for more than two decades. I have observed how the EC has expanded its focus from endorsing a document that was developed through an inclusive process of six years of global visioning to a multifaceted, emergent movement for a widely diverse constituency. Its holistic, ethically grounded values and worldview offer a common gathering place for international law, institutional policy, educational reform, socially responsible economics, academic inquiry, and grassroots activism. Its pillars of emphasis and action principles are oriented toward planetary citizenship: Care for the Diversity of Life; Ecological Integrity; Social and Economic Justice; and Democracy, Non-Violence, and Peace. It offers an inclusive worldview of interconnectedness, relationship with the community of life, inner transformation where "being" is valued over "having," and the concept of universal

responsibility. Just like the movement of a river, the Earth Charter is a receptive container of other movements large and small, and gives definition to them with a common vision of a just, sustainable, and peaceful future.

As these efforts feed into the Earth Charter, an informed pluriversal dialogue is taking place where stories of action and accomplishment across multiple sectors are shared and catalyzed. For example, the Earth Charter's Education Center is a UNESCO Chair that promotes both formal and informal efforts to educate for sustainability. In every part of the world, teachers, NGOs, professors across the disciplinary spectrum, activists, and community organizers are enrolling in the EC's certificate program for Education for Sustainable Development.

An exciting newer development is the Young Leaders program, which brings together motivated grassroots activists who inspire one another with their stories of transformation and change, and gather from one another new strategies that have potential and promise. The global quality of this interchange is significant as it connects multiple kinds of programs and efforts. These activists find a community that sustains the isolation one can often feel. The enthusiasm among these young leaders is palpable.

The Earth Charter has a presence in at least 81 countries, and its intention is not only to be a foundational movement grounded in action, but also to usher in a shift in consciousness. Toward this end, it offers webinars that bring together academics, indigenous leaders, policy analysts, and young activists. Master courses are available on topics from ethical responsibility of business for a sustainable future to international policy to spirituality and well-being. [Podcasts](#) are created that celebrate those who were early actors in the creation of the EC, as well as introducing new voices, stories, and examples of positive action. The EC [website](#) highlights the work of movements across the globe, and a new Earth Charter [e-zine](#) has just been developed.

Exciting new developments are opening up in China as Liaoning University will become an EC Center, and more than fifty of its faculty have received a four-course Certificate in Education for Sustainability Development with the Earth Charter. A whole university approach is also in place at

Okayama University in Japan. A third international conference will be held in April of 2024, where various movements can coalesce into greater momentum and with the urgency of our times.

Importantly, the Earth Charter distinguishes itself from goal-focused approaches that have specific ends and outcomes. Alternatively, it creates open dialogue and sharing around the values and actions that sustain these efforts and make such ends and outcomes enduring. As Thomas Legrand writes, “if we are to survive and thrive...we cannot avoid...a change of mindsets, worldviews, and values, or, at a more fundamental level, a shift in consciousness.”¹

The Earth Charter is action-oriented, but that action embraces a fundamental shift in being. Some have argued that this is too hopeful a premise. Our experience is that this shift in perspective energizes action. It creates an odd enthusiasm. And yes, it offers hope. In *Radical Love*, Satish Kumar writes, “Personal transformation and political transformation become a mutually supportive process, like walking on two legs.” The Earth Charter has evolved from an inspiring document to a global movement that is “walking on two legs” and, from the indigenous North, “seeing with two eyes.”

The river is flowing, and as it gathers waters from multiple streams and rivulets, it becomes a force that changes the topography and wears down resistance. It is gaining momentum. It can only go toward the open sea.

Endnotes

1. Thomas Legrand, *Politics of Being: Wisdom and Science for a New Development Paradigm* (New Zealand: Ocean of Wisdom Press, 2021), 1.

2. Satish Kumar, *Radical Love: From Separation to Connection with the Earth, Each Other, and Ourselves* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2023), 115.

About the Author



Sam Crowell is Professor Emeritus at California State University, San Bernardino, a faculty member at the Earth Charter Center, and a member of the Earth Charter International Council. He also teaches for the Institute for Educational Studies and the Transformative Learning Foundation. With a focus on holistic education, social change, and the Earth Charter, his writings explore the implications of a trans-modernist, Earth-based worldview for sustainability, spirituality, and transformative learning. He holds a PhD in education from the University of Virginia.



Convivialist International: The Art of Living Together

Noemi Gal-Or and Alain Caillé

We are board members of [Convivialist International](#), writing on behalf of the movement. In June 2013, the [Manifeste convivialiste. Déclaration d'interdépendance \(First Manifesto\)](#) was published in France, a text signed by sixty-four international French-speaking authors. It was followed by an expanded and more detailed version—the [Convivialist Manifesto: Towards a Post-Neoliberal World](#), published in 2020 by University of Chicago Press. This second manifesto was cosigned by nearly 300 scholars and activists from 33 different countries, coming from a range of political ideologies from the humanist political center to various leftist movements like degrowth.

Convivialism is a political philosophy of living together in conviviality, yearning for a new path for humanity. It denounces the evils of hubris, which it views as a fundamental distraction from the combined benefits of the four doctrines of democratic modernity (liberalism, communism, anarchism, socialism). Convivialism is unique among many contemporary discourses for two reasons. First, it builds on specific underlying assumptions regarding humanism, and, second, it embraces a holistic and inclusive approach to communication, imperative to the coexistence of cultures.

Convivialism submits that the only legitimate policies and the only acceptable ethics, are those based on the following five principles: common naturality, common humanity, common sociality, legitimate individuation, and creative opposition.

The principle of **common naturality** asserts that we do not live apart from nature but are independent with it and have a responsibility to take care of it. The principle of **common humanity** asserts that beyond differences of skin, nationality, language, culture, religion, wealth, sex, or gender, there is one humanity, which must be respected in each person. The principle

of **common sociality** asserts that that we are social beings, and our greatest wealth lies in the richness of our relationships with associations, societies, and communities small and large. The principle of **legitimate individuation** draws an important distinction between individuation and individualism. Each individual should be able to develop their individuality to the fullest without harming others, a recognition of equal freedom and interdependence as against selfishness and struggle of all against all. The principle of **creative opposition** builds on these to explain that, because of our singularity, it is normal that we may find ourselves in opposition to each other, but such opposition is only legitimate if it still upholds the framework of common humanity, common sociality, and common naturality.

These five principles are subordinate to the absolute imperative of hubris control. They are the pillars of a convivialist democracy of tomorrow that will succeed and replace the nineteenth-century-oriented fledgling democracies of today. We contend that only a convivialist democracy can be fully democratic for, along the other principles, the principle of legitimate individuation offers everyone the possibility of being recognized in their singularity as long as they play the game of controlled opposition; and by outlawing both poverty and extreme wealth, the principles of common humanity and common sociality prevent oligarchic and plutocratic abuse.

We have tried in the past to connect with different organizations in hopes of creating a citizens world parliament, but to no avail due to a lack of sufficient response. Perhaps the time is ripe now.

About the Authors



Noemi Gal-Or is a Professor Emerita of Politics and International Law at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and a board member of the International Convivialist Association. She is a former editor-in-chief of *Canadian International Lawyer*, a board member of the International Law Association's Canada branch, and a member of Transparency International-Canada. She is also a board member of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists (IJL) and editor of IJL's *Justice* magazine. She has published extensively on issues surrounding international law, political economy, terrorism, migration, and gender. She holds a PhD from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.



Alain Caillé is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the Paris Nanterre University, where he founded and co-directed the Laboratory of Sociology, Philosophy and Political Anthropology (SOPHIAPOL). In 1982, he founded the *Revue du MAUSS* (*Mouvement anti-utilitariste en sciences sociales*), an international, interdisciplinary journal of social science and political philosophy. He is the honorary president of the International Convivialist Association and the author of several dozen books, including *The Gift Paradigm: A Short Introduction to the Anti-Utilitarian Movement in Social Sciences*. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of Panthéon-Sorbonne.



MINGAnet: Networks of Knowledge and Care

Martha Giraldo

We are nature, and as interdependent human beings, we are responsible for valuing and caring for the relationships within ourselves, with other beings, and with the earth as the only known home for ourselves and generations to come.

Recognizing that so many initiatives around the world which share such fundamental values and are practicing this way of thinking and being, [MINGAnet](#) is an invitation to co-create a network of networks of “practice and thought,” groups of people working together to collaborate, reflect on their interests and needs, learn from each other, and advocate for political changes to further the care and regeneration of life.

The name MINGAnet comes from the pre-Columbian Quechua indigenous word “minga,” which means “work shared by the community.” Individuals and civil society organizations—including academia—are invited to join this common effort to find ways to work together to bring about a different present and a better future for all.

With an emphasis on promoting dialogue and fostering information and knowledge management, MINGAnet aims to facilitate interactions among its members, increase the visibility of initiatives, encourage collaboration, promote the production of local knowledge, provide open access to quality information, disseminate research, and foster self-organization among its participant communities in a free and open way.

Our network currently consists of twenty-four local, regional, and national organizations who have expressed their interest in advancing this collaborative effort in an environment of co-responsibility and trust. These include groups and networks of nature reserves, solidarity farmers, agroecological producers, seed guardians, ecovillages, and universities, among others.

To help support the project, we are building a fractal digital platform which intertwines technological, organizational, and practical tools in order to cultivate collective intelligence and help us move towards the necessary transformations.

And because the care for life occurs mainly at the local level, we have focused our work primarily on local networks/communities, including indigenous communities and local farmers among others while starting pilot projects focusing on specific subjects very much connected to life care, such as climate change mitigation and food sovereignty, especially regarding seeds, agroecology, and consumption

It is time to help recover lost values, lost sovereignties, the common good, and the care of life. This is the time to start a new era. This is a unique opportunity. We cannot but try, there is urgency, and life is calling us.

About the Author



Martha Giraldo is the coordinator of the MINGAnet project, a network of networks in Latin America. She works to expand access to information and communication technologies across communities in Latin America. She is the former director of RENATA, a Colombian research network that fosters collaboration among universities and research centers.



Global Greens: A Party and a Movement

Tim Hollo

I have thought long and hard about this contribution, as it may be controversial, but I would like to raise the important role of the Greens as an experiment in movement unity.

The [Greens party](#) is a truly global movement (and it has always been understood as both a social movement and an electoral party) which operates as a federation of federations, with autonomous branches in over 100 countries across the Global North and South, representation in communities and councils and parliaments and governments the world over, and a set of clear, agreed core values that align with GTI's goals (and Kothari and Bajpal's [five spheres](#)), set out in the party's four pillars: ecological wisdom, grassroots democracy, social and economic justice, and peace and nonviolence.

The metaphor of the tapestry, used by Martin Luther King Jr. and by Kothari and Bajpal's [Global Tapestry of Alternatives](#), is a beautiful and powerful one, as is the metaphor of an ecosystem that many of us often prefer. Within that plural approach, some may choose to participate in electoral politics, various of us will choose different electoral vehicles, and others will reject it altogether as inherently compromised. Some may work to merge electoral and social change in a range of ways (which is my approach). As we look for vehicles for movement unity, it is crucial that we see this as a search for coordinated unity, for solidarity and interdependence, rather than as an effort to unify into a single bloc.

I also preface my comments by noting the tendency in movements for change to abandon old projects and build new ones when we reach points of difficulty or dispute, or come to see (often with good reason) existing projects as compromised. This is natural, necessary, and expected.

Those of us who see ourselves as part of the project of political ecology must embrace constant

change as a simple fact of ecological reality and to be embraced as the source of renewal. But we should also look at how existing vehicles can, perhaps, be rebooted and renewed in order to contribute more effectively, rather than abandoned.

The Greens party is, of course, also a project that arose from disillusionment with existing vehicles for change. And the Greens are in constant need of challenging ourselves to consider to what extent we are creating transformational change and to what extent we are becoming embedded within the existing system. As someone deeply committed to the Greens project, leading the Australian Greens think tank for the last seven years, I see myself as a critical friend whose role is to be a gadfly, asking these questions, creating space for these discussions, challenging us to see our project as a transformational one, not simply a reformist one.

The mission and structure of the Greens party make it exemplify the idea of an experiment in movement unity for the Great Transition:

- The Greens are based on an agreed set of core values that align with GTI and aim to transform our political, social, and economic systems for ecological sustainability, deep grassroots democracy, social and economic justice, and peace and nonviolence.
- Decision-making in the party is (in a range of different ways, depending on the branch) always based on consensus and deliberative approaches.
- The Greens party is a federation of federations (of federations) founded and structured in a way which matches Elinor Ostrom's polycentric subsidiarity principle, Murray Bookchin's confederalism, and other such bottom-up designs. The Global Greens exists as a federation of four federations: European Greens Federation, African Greens Federation, Asia-Pacific Greens Federation, and Federation of the Greens of the Americas. Decisions on policy, preselection, delegation, and representation are made by members at the most grassroots level possible. Regional and global levels are mostly coordination and skills-sharing opportunities.

In some ways, with hundreds of thousands of members, many thousands of representatives in local and subnational assemblies, hundreds of MPs in national parliaments, and now dozens of ministers

in various governments, the Greens are surely among the most successful of all our existing experiments in movement unity for transition.

The flip side of this success, of course, is that the party has found itself increasingly captured by the existing system, too often working in reformist ways which buttress it rather than transform or replace it.

This should not be taken as a reason to abandon what is a remarkably successful and mature experiment. Rather, we should take this as a reason to reassess, critique, reboot, and renew.

My suggestions for what can be done, which I hope can be applicable to other such experiments, spring from what I see as the crucial questions the Greens, and other similar movement experiments, should constantly ask ourselves. Firstly, how can we best work to be both a social movement and an electoral party? And secondly, how can we best work to transform the system that we are, by necessity, operating within?

In partial answer to the first question, I would point to remarkable work being done by grassroots Greens campaigners around the world putting mutual aid at the core of their campaigning. While this is happening across the globe, it is perhaps most obvious in the UK and parts of Australia, where electoral organizing is being deliberately morphed into community-building exercises for which electoral success is seen as an important result, but not the sole goal.

In central Brisbane, for example, doorknockers worked to build trust, rapport, and engagement over years. Community members were encouraged to join community garden initiatives, food pantries, and similar projects. When the pandemic arrived, those food initiatives quickly morphed into mutual aid, to ensure that neighbors had access to decent food when they lost work. Shortly after, when disastrous floods struck Brisbane, the campaigners mobilized to clean people's homes, provide free barbecues, and much more.

In partial answer to the second question, I see Kothari and Bajpal's articulation of "direct and delegated democracy, which locates critical decision-making in spaces that enable every person to participate meaningfully, then builds toward larger levels of governance by downwardly accountable institutions" as crucial.

With electoral success, in particular once government is within reach, comes a centralizing tendency, and a tendency to use systems of hierarchy and coercion that are embedded within existing government and state apparatus. This must be resisted if we are to make the transition we seek.

As noted above, the Greens party is structurally designed on the principle of subsidiarity, and we must always return to that. We must, at every level, work for truly grassroots democracy, decentering, distributing, and dissolving power, building systems and institutions that support and enable the people to hold and share power, and dragging existing institutions to catch up or get out of the way. We can do this through establishing community assemblies of various kinds, delegating decision-making wherever possible, making government ever more transparent and accountable, creating community-based alternatives to coercive policing and justice systems, and much more. This is already being done where Greens are sharing government, in parts of Australia, Europe, and the Americas. But it is very early days, and far more work is needed.

About the Author



Tim Hollo is executive director of the Green Institute, where he focuses on eco-political philosophy, practice, and policy related to the rights of nature, universal basic income, and participatory democracy. He is a Visiting Fellow at the Sydney Environment Institute at the University of Sydney and author of *Living Democracy: An Ecological Manifesto for the End of the World as We know It*. He previously served as Communications Director for Australian Greens Leader Christine Milne and has been both a board member and campaigner at Greenpeace Australia Pacific. As both environmentalist and musician, Tim founded Green Music Australia to reduce the environmental impact of the music sector and drive social and cultural change.



The Alternatives Project: Rethinking Education

Steven Klees

[The Alternatives Project](#) (TAP) is a diverse, transnational collective of progressive academics, union members, civil society activists, and social movement participants concerned with building a global collective critical voice oriented towards education and societal transformation. TAP envisions and works towards a radical rethinking of education and society globally.

The current social, economic, political, and educational arrangements reproduce relations of power that perpetuate profound inequities and ultimately threaten life on the planet. We need alternative pedagogies and just, regenerative education systems that will support the social transformations required to create a more equitable and sustainable world.

Coexisting and interrelated global crises are pushing humanity and the living planet towards social, political, economic, and ecological collapse. These crises—currently seen in the pandemic, structural inequalities, police brutality and racism, entrenched patriarchy, accelerating climate chaos, and the constant threat of wars—are driven globally by capitalism and militarism. We must seize this unique historical moment to reconceive and radically change public education as an entry point for deeper societal transformations.

TAP seeks to help build a movement that will offer a collective challenge to dominant ideas and policies on education and “development” through grassroots struggles and campaigns. We envision a long-term effort to build and promote a new vision of alternative approaches, a center for progressive analysis and alternative ideas, that is linked to a wide range of progressive and radical organizations and movements that will become a force for equitable learning opportunities and outcomes, democracy, and economic and social justice in a more sustainable world.

Our objectives are the following:

- To provide a place for the enhancement of a collective critical global voice for education and social transformation;
- To develop an international network of progressive academics, activists, and practitioners committed to education and social justice;
- To connect our education network with other progressive movements and groups concerned with societal transformation; and
- To advocate for and build campaigns around creating alternative, progressive approaches to education.

One of our first activities was to develop a [Statement](#) that now has over 400 signatures, and we invite you to add yours. We have presented at the last two World Social Forums and have run a [number of webinars](#) on alternatives in partnership with [Ecoversities](#), [Educere Alliance](#), [Global Tapestry of Alternatives](#), [PeDAGoG](#), [Radical Ecological Democracy](#), and [Wellbeing Economy Alliance](#).

About the Author



Steven Klees is Distinguished Scholar-Teacher and Professor of International Education Policy at the University of Maryland and author of *The Conscience of a Progressive*. His research centers on the political economy of education and development, and he has conducted evaluations of education programs and policies in dozens of countries for a wide array of international agencies, ministries, and NGOs. He has served on the faculty of Cornell University, Stanford University, Florida State University, and the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte in Brazil. He holds a PhD in economics and public policy from Stanford University.



Deep Transformation Network: Becoming Change Catalysts

Jeremy Lent

In a groundbreaking recent book, *Change: How to Make Big Things Happen*, leading social network theorist Damon Centola demonstrates how transformative change is generally catalyzed by small, highly committed groups of enthusiasts located on the periphery of mainstream culture, who reinforce each other's commitment to a new sociocultural norm through repeated affirming interactions, which help to validate innovative ideas.¹

The conventional view of social transformation is that this kind of network merely leads to redundant connections and that effective social contagion requires multiple weak ties. However, Centola convincingly shows that when it comes to innovative ideas and behaviors, the reinforcement of redundant, strong ties helps to create a critical mass for transformation by turning novel ideas into familiar norms.

That is the underlying notion behind the [Deep Transformation Network](#) (DTN), an online network that I initiated in early 2022 with the help of several committed colleagues, and which has since grown into more than 3,000 members worldwide. The network is open to all those who recognize that our civilization is in existential crisis—and desire to engage with others in facilitating a deep transformation toward a life-affirming future on a regenerated Earth.

The network's mission, as its tagline states, is to “explore pathways to an ecological civilization.” It offers a vibrant place for ideas, practices, and approaches for civilizational transformation as well as an inspiring and nourishing place to cultivate an international community of care.

We are a community sharing deep concern about our civilization's direction, with an intention to engage constructively to change its trajectory and to help amplify the forces for Deep

Transformation that could set humanity on a path of future flourishing on a regenerated Earth. With reverence for the dignity of all sentient beings, we pursue sustained mutually beneficial symbiosis within human society, and between humans and the living Earth.

The DTN is a public network, welcoming people from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultural traditions. It is free for everyone, and so far has been sustainably funded on a donation basis. The community places a high value on principles of self-organization and grassroots empowerment. Any member can post an article, share their own offerings, and create an event, and even create a separate identifiable group within the network.

From the outset, the community established certain “Guiding Principles” around caring, diversity, generativity, respect, and non-commercial behavior. Perhaps because of this, the quality of interaction has been consistently respectful and generative, with only extremely rare cases where moderation has been needed. While there is clearly a “founder effect” which has given me outsize influence, governance is driven by a Moderators group, which anyone can apply to join, with an intention to move toward a sociocracy governance model as the community expands.

Beyond the active feed, where members continually post articles and engage interactively on issues around deep transformation, the network hosts regular live events, often with over a hundred members participating live, and hundreds more watching the recordings. Monthly meetings feature expert panels and cover topics salient to system redesign, e.g., citizens’ assemblies, effective forms of direct action, cosmocalism, worker-owned co-ops, the population issue, and evaluations of the COP process and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Using a systems perspective on civilizational change, the DTN might be conceptualized as a “transformation catalyst” in the terminology of change theorist Sandra Waddock. In her upcoming book *Catalyzing Transformation*, she describes transformation catalysts as “entities—people, groups of people, organizations, and initiatives—that work to bring about systemic transformation by undertaking a set of activities that we synthesize as connecting, cohering, and amplifying the work of others.”²

Using this formulation, the process of “connecting” and “cohering” seems to correspond to Centola’s description of transformative networks with reinforcing strong ties. So far, so good—but what

about “amplifying the work of others”? It is clear that civilizational transformation only has a chance of occurring if a critical mass of networks dedicated to change engage in positive feedback with each other, thus augmenting the energy of each, and ultimately creating an emergent result where the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts.

In network theory, Metcalf’s law states that the power of a network is proportional to the square of the number of connected users. This would seem to argue for an increased emphasis on greater inter-network cooperation, where each community actively seeks to amplify the energy of related communities that hold aligned values and goals.

For this reason, the DTN’s orientation is as much directed outward toward other networks as inward to its own membership. Live events give an opportunity for DTN members to learn and engage with other related change-making groups. We have hosted leading members of the [Global Tapestry of Alternatives](#) to share their work as well as leaders of the [Wellbeing Economic Alliance](#) to educate DTN members on their plans. Other groups that have been platformed in DTN meetings include the [Equatorial Voices Network](#)—an international group of young climate activists in the Global South—and David Sloan Wilson’s [Prosocial Commons](#).

Additionally, the DTN invites other networks to establish “portals” within it, in the form of sub-groups that enhance further interaction between the DTN and other communities. Examples of these groups include the Prosocial Commons, Gaia Education, and the Religious Natural Orientation, which links to the [Religious Naturalist Association](#) inspired by biologist Ursula Goodenough.

The DTN is still very early in its life cycle. As our community expands, we are asking how best to cultivate and direct its growth. Should we focus more on guiding members directly toward action initiatives? Can we find creative technical solutions to enhance inter-network collaboration? How can we encourage more diversity in membership (it is currently comprised predominantly of white, English-speaking members from the Global North)?

It is my intention, and that of others in the DTN, that this network will help to contribute to the broader movement for civilizational transformation that so many in the Great Transition Network are advancing.

Endnotes

1. Damon Centola, *Change: How to Make Big Things Happen* (New York: Little, Brown Spark, 2021).
2. Sandra Waddock, *Catalyzing Transformation: Making Systems Change Happen* (New York: Business Expert Press, 2023).

About the Author



Jeremy Lent is an author and speaker whose work investigates the underlying causes of our civilization's existential crisis and explores pathways toward a life-affirming future. His award-winning books, *The Patterning Instinct: A Cultural History of Humanity's Search for Meaning* and *The Web of Meaning: Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place in the Universe*, trace the historical underpinnings and flaws of the dominant worldview, and offer a foundation for an integrative worldview that could lead humanity to a flourishing future. He is founder of the Deep Transformation Network, an online global community devoted to facilitating a deep transformation toward a life-affirming future on a regenerated Earth.



Global Ecosocialist Network

Michael Löwy

The dramatic development of the ecological crisis, the catastrophic possibility of an irreversible climate change, and the growing consciousness that the capitalist system is the main cause of this threat to human life in the planet have all led to an increased interest, worldwide, in ecosocialism as a radical, anti-systemic alternative. Ecosocialism offers a strategy for systemic transformation, a proposal that does not compromise with the structures it wishes to subvert.

Since the ecological issue is a planetary one, and since capitalism rules on global scale, ecosocialists felt the need for international unity and international common initiatives. A first attempt took place during the years 2005 to 2010. Among its initiators were Joel Kovel (USA), Ian Angus (Canada), the current writer (France), Pedro Ivo Batista (Brazil), and Hugo Blanco (Peru). Its most important initiative was the publication of the [Belem Ecosocialist Manifesto on Climate Change](#), signed by hundreds of ecosocialists in a few dozen countries. The Manifesto was distributed in Portuguese and English at the World Social Forum in Belem do Para, in the heart of the Brazilian Amazonian Forest, in 2009. A small international ecosocialist meeting took place in Belem on this occasion, attended by the great Peruvian indigenous leader Hugo Blanco, who declared, “We, the indigenous communities of the Americas, have been practicing ecosocialism for centuries.”

This first attempt soon ceased to function.

A new initiative was started by the Irish Marxist scholar and activist John Molyneux in 2019: the [Global Ecosocialist Network](#) (GEN). It continues its activities today, despite Molyneux’s sudden and untimely death.

The GEN describes itself as an “international association of socialists formed in response to the catastrophic ecological crisis rapidly engulfing our world.”

Such is the scale of this crisis—with melting ice caps, record-breaking heatwaves, appalling droughts, and deadly floods and fires around the world—that even the mainstream capitalist media is obliged to report many of these terrible and ominous developments. Nevertheless, such reporting resolutely refuses to draw out the links between these events and, to the extent feasible, to avoid any connection to the underlying problem of climate change or capitalism.

Even among climate activists, including the inspiring new generation of school strikers, Extinction Rebellion rebels, and COP protestors who have hit the streets of the world in such magnificent numbers, the dominant discourse is what might be called “new green liberalism.” This aspires either to change within and on the basis of capitalism or to change the system by means of bringing about a collective change of heart.

This rise of activism and concern is enormously welcome, but from an ecosocialist perspective, it is not enough. We believe that to prevent utter disaster and cope with the disasters that are already inevitable, a structural challenge to capitalism is essential.

The purpose of the GEN is to assist the worldwide dissemination of socialist responses to the environmental crisis. Its aim is simply to facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, analyses, and debates from an ecosocialist point of view.

These are our key principles:

- (1) There is a generalized environmental crisis of which climate change is the lead element. This crisis is extremely urgent and threatens the future of humanity and countless other species.
- (2) The cause of this crisis is capitalism—an economic and social system based on competitive exploitation and production for profit.
- (3) Solving this crisis and surviving it involves an international break with capitalism and its replacement by socialism—an economic and social system based on collective ownership of the main forces of production and democratic planning.
- (4) To achieve this, we need a global mobilization of people power.

(5) Such mobilization requires a commitment to a just transition, i.e., not one based on attacking the jobs and living standards of the mass of working people.

(6) The united mobilization we need also requires opposition to all racist, sexist, national, homophobic, and transphobic oppression.

On this basis, we invite socialists from around the world to become members and socialist organizations to affiliate with us. We would stress that we are simply a network. Members of existing parties, groups, or campaigns are all welcome to join and socialist organizations are invited to affiliate without any restriction or limitation on their current activities. We are socialists, but we are not controlled by or committed to any particular socialist party or tendency.

Our main form of communication with each other and with the public will be through our [website](#) and associated social media along with the Newsletter we will send out to members and affiliates.

As the statement above explains, it is a modest initiative with limited aims. But it has been able to unite activists and scholars from the South and the North: Latin America, the US, Canada, Europe, Australia, and South Africa. It includes mainly individuals but also some political organizations such as the UK Green Left, or the Socialist Party of Malaysia, and some local networks, such as the Green Ecosocialist Network (USA) or the Brazilian Ecosocialist Network. It has a site where members publish their papers, and it organizes public debates. From time to time, it issues common statements.

The Global Ecosocialist Network serves as a first practical step towards the international organization of ecosocialists.

About the Author



Michael Löwy is a French-Brazilian Marxist sociologist and philosopher. He serves as Emeritus Research Director at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) in Paris and is the co-author, with Joel Kovel, of *An Ecosocialist Manifesto* (2001). His published works include *On Changing the World: Essays in Political Philosophy from Karl Marx to Walter Benjamin* and *Ecosocialism: A Radical Alternative to the Capitalist Ecological Catastrophe*.



ATTAC: Challenging Neoliberalism

Gustave Massiah

In December 1999, in an editorial in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Ignacio Ramonet proposed a tax on international financial transactions, revisiting a proposal from Nobel-Prize-winning economist James Tobin. For Tobin, the idea was to reduce the speculation that threatened fixed exchange rate regimes. Ramonet broadened the objective and proposed a tax on all financial transactions to counter the disastrous effects of financial globalization. [ATTAC](#) (Association Internationale pour la Taxation des Transactions financières et l'Action Citoyenne, or International Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and Citizen Action) was created on June 3, 1998 in Paris at a meeting chaired by Bernard Cassen, director of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, of some forty trade unions, newspapers, and civil society groups. Approximately 30,000 people joined by setting up local committees. At the same time, an ATTAC Scientific Council of around fifty people was created.

On January 30, 1998, ATTAC and the World Alternatives Forum, created by Samir Amin and François Houtard, took part in a demonstration in Davos against the World Economic Forum. ATTAC Italy was also created and held a seminar on financial crime. An international meeting was held in Paris on December 11, 1998, to found the “International Movement for the Democratic Control of Financial Markets and their Institutions,” the International ATTAC Movement. This movement created an international platform, with no hierarchical structures and no geographical center. It is now present in thirty-eight countries. It promotes the convergence of trade unions, human rights movements, and environmental movements against neoliberal proposals and advocates for participatory democracy. ATTAC played an active role in the creation of the World Social Forums. The first Forum, in Porto Alegre in 2001, was decided at a meeting between Bernard Cassen and Chico Whitaker at the ATTAC offices. The WSFs spread around the world.

Initially, the World Social Forum played an innovative role and contributed to a period of struggle and mobilization, from Seattle in 1999 to the financial crisis of 2007/2008. Since 2008, the global landscape has been characterized by an austeritarian neoliberalism combining austerity with authoritarianism, now exacerbated by climate and pandemic. The World Social Forum dealt well with the 2008 crisis, and the [Belém forum in 2009](#) was excellent. It revealed the emergence of new movements (women's rights, Via Campesina, indigenous peoples) and emphasized the relationship between humankind and nature. It outlined a strategic approach, stressing the need for resistance against financialization and neoliberal globalization. Some of these proposals are reflected in the [conclusions](#) of the United Nations Commission chaired by Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen. The Belem Forum also emphasized the search for alternatives, breaking with the past by highlighting new concepts (the commons, buen vivir, social property, the democratization of democracy, etc.). It described the crisis of civilization and the period to come as one of emerging movements and a strategic approach to social, ecological, and democratic issues.

Since 2008, neoliberalism has been in crisis, but it is still dominant. It is reinforcing its strategy: commodification, privatization, financialization. We are a long way from Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. From 2011 onwards, movements have been strengthening, with the Arab Spring, the Indignados, the Occupys, and the occupation of squares, but they have faced severe repression. Financialization is on the rise, but it is increasingly in contradiction with the evolution of the productivist mode; it is fundamentally challenged by the growing consciousness of ecological limits.

As an example of the radical nature of movements and the scale of resistance, we can mention, in France, the succession of movements led by trade unions, farmers, and workers, with the support of ATTAC France. *Nuit Debout* occupied the Place de la République in Paris day and night from March to the end of May 2016. It was a convergence of struggles, without a spokesperson or leader, in direct democracy against a law to make it easier for companies to lay off workers and reduce overtime payments. The Yellow Vests movement was launched in November 2018, via the web and social networks, lasting until November 2020 with its demands for better living, real democracy, and the abolition of privileges. It faced significant repression given an aggressive, coordinated police strategy. The social movement against pension reform in 2023 saw millions of people in the streets during fourteen days of action. Police repression was extremely violent, and hundreds of people

were arrested. Environmental protests against the mega-basins that were diverting water resources for the benefit of large-scale farmers faced violent repression in Sainte-Soline on March 25, 2023.

There are three generations of activists in the ATTAC movement. The first generation has its roots in decolonization and the May 1968 movements. The second came from the women's movement and the alterglobalization social forums. The third is building its culture with the new movements emerging since 2011.

In every country, the ATTAC movement is part of these radical new movements. These include the feminist movement, the environmental movement, the movement against discrimination and racism, the indigenous peoples movement, and movements to protect the rights of migrants. The leadership of the movement is generally made up of equal numbers of men and women. In the ecological movement, awareness of the urgency of the situation and the inability of leaders to act has radicalized many.

Awareness of discrimination and racism has increased in all countries, as Black Lives Matter has shown. In the ATTAC movement, there is a clear consciousness that decolonization is not over. State independence was only the first step, and it must be followed by the liberation of nations and peoples. All ATTACs are committed to the issues of anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and migrants' rights.

ATTACs are also leading the battle in theory, against the dictatorial control imposed by neoliberal economists over the economics and social sciences teaching. In several countries, they have the support of the *"atterrés economists"* ("appalled economists"), who are challenging neoliberal orthodoxy.

The ATTAC movement is present in 38 countries around the world, including eleven European countries, particularly France, Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy, and Hungary. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

About the Author



Gustave Massiah is an engineer, economist, and former professor at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-La Villette. He was a founding member of CEDETIM (Centre d'études et d'initiatives de solidarité internationale), a global solidarity organization, and Secretary General of the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples. He has been a prominent voice in the alter-globalization movement, serving as the president of CRID (Centre de recherche et d'information sur le développement) from 2000 to 2008 and vice president of ATTAC from 2001 to 2006. He is a founding member of the IPAM network (Initiatives for Another World) and is on the International Council of the World Social Forum. In 2011, he published *Une stratégie altermondialiste*.



May First Movement Technology: Digital Radicalism

Melanie Bush, Jes Ciacchi, Alice Aguilar, and Estrella Soria

Though technologies have been with us from the dawn of time, the term in today's world refers almost exclusively to a very small number of digital technologies offered by huge transnational corporations.¹ With them come new possibilities, though also the imposition of values, epistemologies, and interests distant from those who use them. How could we design technologies in a consensual way, to support people and our planet? What would it mean to have infrastructure for political movements deeply rooted in their communities and committed to social justice? Resistance in the digital environment demands that we center our values, intentions, and dreams, focusing on other ways to live, be, and know.

May First Movement Technology is a cooperative (primarily based in the United States and Mexico) that aims to put these values into practice: digital media that supports social struggles and grassroots movements working to create the world we know is possible. We maintain our own technological infrastructure and help expose the limitations of mainstream services. We are building a shared political perspective among those who use these technologies so that we can make them work for us, through collective decision-making. We create alliances, listen to each other's experiences, and jointly pursue creative forms that manifest our dreams.

On Being Part of May First

The MFMT cooperative has more than 500 members (mostly organizations) and a structure that is quite different from other technology services providers, as it promotes democratic participation. Members' commitment to learning, making decisions, and sharing knowledge about both political and technological issues makes May First unique in technological and social movements.

“The struggles for digital and bodily autonomy go hand in hand” is the first phrase we encounter when visiting the [MFMT website](#). In our political manifesto, we express our commitment to support the building of social movements based on the strategic and collective control of technology for global transformation and emancipation within and across borders.

Having a broad membership provides political strength and a wealth of power, knowledge, skill, and thought that complements technological infrastructure that is offered to organizations. The leadership of May First consists of committed community activists and technologists who—based on their values, vision, and strategies regarding technologies—understand and evaluate the political times. The Board of Directors, as well as the membership, have throughout the years forged relationships with social movement organizations and activists who have eventually become members of the Cooperative, amplifying their potential. We view ourselves as different from other technical organizations, who often limit their board to technical experts. As Pablo Correa of La Coperacha, a member of the MFMT Board, has emphasized, “May First’s vision is quite the opposite; that of having people come from diverse struggles, movements, organizations, and other social groupings, connecting to those diverse realities, expressing their analyses, visions and sensibilities in the leadership of the organization.”

Our Political Vision

The members of the Cooperative emphasize the fundamental role of political perspectives in the building of a digital space that is clearly focused and meaningful. The design and governance of technology have an essential role to play in dismantling systems like capitalism, patriarchy, and racism and in cultivating our connection to the planet. As Jaime Villarreal, an MFMT board member, has said, “We aren’t just defending a virtual territory of resistance to an Internet controlled by state and corporate surveillance capitalism; we are ensuring our basic ability to communicate freely, organize and share both life and struggles both within and between our own respective communities and physical territories of resistance.”

Understanding how mainstream technologies can be used to buttress the prison-industrial complex, surveillance capitalism, and abortion bans helps us to strengthen our solidarity work as

we forge connections across movements. Once connections are made, we can use technology to effectively reach our objectives. Our struggles cannot be isolated.

Technological Resistance

Following the trail of the origins of several of the corporate platforms reveals how they developed based on the looting of technologies from open-source communities and efforts shared in the commons, e.g., “social media.” During the 90s, the technologies were just emerging when the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) took to the streets. The news was shared by word of mouth and quickly reached the digital media of the times; journalists and activists found it via bulletin board systems (or BBSs)—an adequate space, free and independent from the traditional mass media—that allowed for the distribution of the news of the indigenous uprising in the southeastern part of Mexico, thus overcoming the media blockade. Soon afterwards, the Internet was co-opted into being a business and the independent bulletin boards ceased to be used, swallowed by social networks that, copying their characteristics, updated them and presented them as new forms of communication.

The digital world has expanded since—with digital currencies, online financial platforms, data markets, surveillance, social media, expanded access to information, and much more. It is incumbent upon us to offer an alternative vision to this increasingly privatized global commons.

Viewing technology from a political perspective is still, however, far-off for most communities. Critical digital education is a great ally, as are the learning experiences of social movements that today encompass practices, feelings, and “sentipensares” (feeling-thinking) both familiar and new. If being outraged by impositions moves us, we can also act against technological tyranny and nurture digital spaces that are liberating, cooperative, and autonomous.

Endnotes

1. See full article for references: <https://mayfirst.coop/es/post/2023/autonomous-technology>.

About the Authors



Melanie Bush is Professor of Sociology at Adelphia University as well as a board member of May First Movement Technology (MFMT) and the US Solidarity Economy Network.



Jes Ciacchi is the Membership Coordinator and a board member of May First Movement Technology (MFMT).



Alice Aguilar is the board co-chair of May First Movement Technology (MFMT) as well as the executive director of the Progressive Technology Project, which strengthens grassroots organizations through the strategic use of technology.



Estrella Soria is a board member of May First Movement Technology (MFMT) and a consultant in digital literacy, with experience in digital protection for activists in Latin America.



World Social Forum: How It Can Survive

Francine Mestrum

The World Social Forum of Porto Alegre in 2001 was a milestone in the creation of a global movement against neoliberalism. After the “Battle of Seattle” in 1999 around the Ministerial Summit of the World Trade Organization, it was a clear sign that movements, all over the world, were saying “Enough!” Privatization, deregulations, austerity, dismantlement of economic and social rights while preaching democracy—lower and middle classes in North and South were suffering. They came together to voice a loud and clear “Stop! Here we are, together, to let you, dominant forces of the world, know that we have power and that we will become even more powerful.”

Other social forums followed, in Porto Alegre, in Mumbai, in Dakar and Nairobi, in Belem and Salvador de Bahia. However, by 2010, the momentum had passed. If more than one hundred thousand people come together to celebrate their diversity without being able to start thinking about common alternatives and strategies, the future is bleak.

It became clear that those who started this brilliant experience in fact did not want a “movement of movements,” they just wanted “movements.” They did not want to fight capitalism, but only its worst neoliberal excesses. They did not want a democracy of opposing voices, but only the unanimity of the powerful at the level of civil society.

Most intellectuals and big organizations who had been so important to the nascent movement left disappointed. For more than ten years, the WSF and its International Council lingered on, fighting and acting as if solutions were sought for. Even when the President of Brazil was impeached or when a well-known activist was shot in Rio de Janeiro, the WSF and its

International Council were not able to condemn these facts and make their voices heard. They were slowly dying.

In 2020, an initiative was taken by some surviving members of its International Council (with Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Roberto Savio amongst others) to start a [reflection process](#) on how to save and renew it. Once again, all proposals were rejected by those who clearly were afraid of any political positioning. What had been a brilliant idea at its start became the nail in its coffin twenty years later.

In the meantime, the world is changing, with shifting geopolitical relations, wars and conflicts, an even harsher neoliberalism, declining democracies, even more powerful financial markets, growing wealth accumulation and staggering inequalities, open racism, and a worsening climate crisis. The reasons for acting on a global level, since all people are suffering, become clearer by the day.

In the end, a decision was taken at the start of 2023 to create a permanent political assembly, autonomous but as part of the global WSF process: the [World Assembly of Struggles and Resistance of the WSF](#). It should be able to take positions on important political events, to organize meetings with global intellectuals and movements, to reflect on strategies, to organize actions, and to bring together movements working on different but interconnected topics.

One paragraph is enough to state the objectives, but can it work?

Obviously, the first important condition is the dynamics this assembly can create. If enough people become aware of its importance and its potential, a long-term effort can be started to create a global movement.

Secondly, in order to bring movements closer to each other, it is necessary to know each other and to know one's own fundamental objectives and principles. This means open and honest talks in order to know our differences and to assess the possibilities for common action. The left has always been very fragmented and averse to discussing its often minor and certainly its major differences.

Thirdly, we need an open attitude to start and search for common concerns. This will be the most difficult point for which the rules have to be clearly spelled out. It cannot be about doing away with differences or identities—on the contrary. Nor can it be about limiting the action radius of

movements. It should be about finding out which concerns a number of movements share, in spite of their diversity. It requires that movements and their leaders take off their blinders, put their egos in the fridge, and look openly at the world and at other movements.

Finally, this endeavor will require people and resources and lots of patience and time. It is a long-term exercise that should start urgently. If only the WSF had started with it ten or fifteen years ago, the movement of movements might have been a reality today.

A new World Social Forum is now in the making for February 2024 in Kathmandu, Nepal. It can be an excellent opportunity to test these ideas and start to put them into practice.

The idea behind this exercise is the awareness that “another world” cannot be made without changing power relations and tackling the economic system—neoliberal capitalism—that made the world to what it is today, a devastating reality for people, for societies and for nature, that is for all life on this planet.

Whether this needs a “citizens movement” or a “movement of movements” is a matter to be discussed, as well as the degree of centralized organization and direction, bearing in mind the goal is both to improve people’s lives and to build another world. There are not that many historical examples, trade unions being certainly among the most important ones. Many concepts and objectives will need to be examined, not to arrive at one uniform movement or model, but to better apprehend the degree of intersectionality.

About the Author



Francine Mestrum is chair of Global Social Justice, an association for transformative universal social protection and the common good. With a special focus on the social commons, her research concerns social dimensions of globalization, poverty, inequality, social protection, public services, and gender. She is a member of the International Council of the World Social Forum and of the International Organizing Committee of the Asia Europe People’s Forum. Her most recent book is *The Social Commons: Rethinking Social Justice in Post-Neoliberal Societies*.



War on Want: Linking Environment and Justice

Sebastian Ordoñez Muñoz

What can we achieve together that we cannot accomplish alone? Why do many ambitious efforts to change the world inadvertently replicate the structures they intend to dismantle? How can we displace oppressive practices and unlearn organizing methods that seem devoid of spirit and soma? As student-practitioners of activism, popular education, and social transformation, we constantly grapple with these questions of practice. This article introduces the Global Green New Deal and Post-Extractive Futures, two budding and complementary initiatives that aim to integrate radical care into our practice of internationalism.

Toward a Global Green New Deal

Since 2020, [The Global Green New Deal](#) has been building a vision of an economy that works for people and the planet—one that moves away from systems of limitless extraction and exploitation, towards those of care and repair.

But what are the main contradictions or tensions between GND demands in the Global North and climate justice demands in the Global South? Where are alignments that Global North activists should be pushing right now in allyship? And what is the common thread that holds together these diverse proposals and visions?

In attempting to synthesize the many issues and demands from movements across the Global North and South that must make up a truly comprehensive and internationalist GGND, we have identified four tests against which interventions that set out to address the climate crisis should be measured. Through its four tests, this GGND offers clear criteria that distinguish between action and climate-just action:

- Does it keep us below 1.5 °C, with everyone doing their fair share of effort?
- Does it tackle inequality and poverty?
- Does it put people and the planet first and allow us to thrive within planetary boundaries?
- Does it uproot historical injustices and systems of oppression and build a society based on care and repair?

Working towards realizing the four key principles above, the central premise of the GGND framework is that a just recovery from the climate crisis must guarantee the right of all living beings to exist with dignity by tackling the systemic causes of poverty, inequality, and ecological breakdown—addressing the historic responsibility of the Global North while developing avenues for a fair and just recovery that respects our planetary limits and ecological systems. These four tests provide us with a clear lens that can be applied to existing policy frameworks.

While drawing on various streams, a GGND response is fundamentally anchored in two principles: courage and connection.

Courage: The Global Green New Deal is a metaphor for ambition, for meeting the ecological crisis in its magnitude and having the courage to reimagine the economy on a planetary scale. The GGND is an orientation of boldness, gearing social and economic policy towards the global environmental challenge. Rejecting piecemeal approaches to systemic crises, it is a visionary proclamation not just of what we do not want but of what we are for. It is an attempt to envision what the world could look like.

Connection: The goal of a Global Green New Deal is ensuring a dignified and thriving life for all. Cutting across all GGND pillars and proposals is a desire to improve health and well-being for all people. What is wrong about the economy is not the choices of individuals: it is a system, and one that must be transformed.

Post-Extractive Futures: Beginnings

[Post-Extractive Futures](#) first came into being during a meeting in 2022, hosted by War on Want, Tipping Point UK, and Junte Gente (Puerto Rico).¹ This gathering fostered collaboration between

movements fighting for and creating futures beyond extractivism, uniting those working in environmental and climate justice, just transitions, post-growth and degrowth, ecosocialism and postcapitalism, decolonization and abolition, and ecofeminism.

When we asked grassroots movement organizers what they wanted from an event that brought together activists, campaigners, and system changers from around the world, the unanimous response was a focus on how we do things, not just what we do. They wanted to learn about experiments, models, and examples of emancipatory change.

Questions, Reflections, and Hypotheses about the Systems We Transform: Organizations and movements often have transformational capacities that go unnoticed due to differing language and vocabulary. Embracing a broader understanding bridges these gaps. It is vital to prioritize networks rooted in genuine care and shift from spectacle-driven politics towards relational values like *ubuntu*. Systems are ever-evolving, often resistant, but our resilience matches theirs. The essence of care lies in being genuinely present, which demands introspection, rest, and patience. As we are all system components, change demands holistic self-awareness and ecological movement. In essence, our approach should match the complexity of the systems we aim to revolutionize.

Provocations about Our Engagements: We embrace diverse roles, from project incubators to caregivers, valuing shared learning and skill acquisition. Our strength lies in limitless creativity, breaking traditional sectoral boundaries, and flexibility. Prioritizing experimentation over established methodologies, our role is akin to a doula for our ecosystems, nurturing new possibilities while respecting transitions. Power, in our view, stems from collective ownership and relationality, differing from conventional oppressive paradigms. We aim to foster self-sustaining initiatives, emphasizing the sacredness of solidarity, always present but eternally beyond full grasp.

Vision: What Can We Do Together That We Cannot Do Alone?

Together, we can teach and challenge each other to imagine the world in new ways.

Together, we believe in a diversity of worlds of life, where no being is disposable, and no land is desecrated. Worlds where everyone's essential needs and well-being are honored, where the labor of nourishing life is equally shared.

Worlds of reparations and memory, radical love and intersectional solidarities, of celebrating, music and ceremony, of joy and connection, of more time with family and loved ones, of public abundance and commons, of decolonial thinking-feeling, of abolition and harm reduction, of liberation and justice, of sovereignties in our territories and waters.

So many things hold us back from these worlds. Among them is rigidity—an inability to believe the world could look differently, or that we can do things differently to get there. Against rigidity, we propose play, experimentation, ritual, embodiment, and curiosity.

We envision Post-Extractive Futures as a space of encounters between movements fighting for and creating these futures today, a space of weaving and seeding networks of solidarity, of daring visioning, co-inspiring and co-learning, a space to share concrete skills and tools, but also to embrace and nurture each other, for the collective healing and energy we need to continue our struggles, as part of broader infrastructures for caring and walking together.

Endnotes

1. Today Post-Extractive Futures is comprised of Tatian Garavito (Tipping Point UK), Gustavo Garcia (Junte Gente), Liliana Buitrago (Ecosocial Pact of the South), Vasna Ramasar (Global Tapestry of Alternatives), Delmy Cruz (Mujeres Transformando Mundos), Sebastian Ordoñez (War on Want), Daniel Voskoboynik & Marta Music.

About the Author



Sebastian Ordoñez Muñoz is Senior Programmes Officer for Climate Justice at War on Want, where he helps to coordinate the Global Green New Deal Project and the Post-Extractive Futures Collective.



Local Futures: The Power of Decentralization

Helena Norberg-Hodge

At [Local Futures](#), we are convinced that the biggest obstacle to a strong united movement is a lack of understanding of the global economic system. This centralized system—*which now affects the entire global population*—is a vast invisible hand that exerts ever more power, not only over our political and economic systems, but also over our view of history, our view of human nature, and our view of ourselves. Rather than looking critically at this potent force, much of humanity has been sold on the idea that the modern industrial economy has brought us genuine progress, freeing us from the bonds of inferior, premodern cultures. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We believe that what is needed is to disseminate a clear, holistic analysis that explains the common root cause of the many crises we face, and that points to a conceptually simple solution to all of them. Uniting around a common *vision* would allow us to speak with a shared *voice*.

Even among grassroots activists, unfortunately, there is little awareness that the same global economic policies that are driving up emissions and environmental problems are making the vast majority poorer year by year: even in the so-called “rich” countries, people have to work harder and harder just to put food on the table and a roof over their head.

From its foundations in slavery and enclosures, the global economy has created an artificial scarcity of jobs, widened the gap between rich and poor, and destroyed ecosystems worldwide. It has manipulated the financial system and our worldviews, all the time favoring energy and resource-intensive production over more human-scale, ecological production. It has imposed both biological monoculture and a human consumer monoculture—a systematic destruction of diversity that is fundamentally anti-life. It is the underlying cause of our multiple crises.

But the response from civil society around the world has generally been to focus on individual impacts as though they were separate issues. Instead of supporting an economic shift away from the global and toward the local that would solve multiple social, environmental, and economic problems, movements focus on poverty, human rights, destruction of forests, toxic pollution, etc. This essentially puts them in competition with one another for scarce funding, public attention, and volunteers. And because the economy has operated hand in hand with national governments, local responses usually focus on those governments rather than the largely invisible global empire behind all of them. This rejection of government can easily become fodder for right-wing demagogues.

With the help of the mainstream media, the global economic suprastructure has encouraged further and further fragmentation. Rather than robust discourse, we are instead given a theatre of polarized divisions: left vs. right, social vs. environmental, spiritual vs. political, and so on. Even worse, we are subjected by social media to psychological warfare—supported by algorithms and AI—that encourages an extreme politics of identity that can turn violent and hateful.

We believe that the task before us is to encourage economic localization. As part of that, we need to distinguish between “resistance” and “renewal.” There is an absolute need for global collaboration to create widespread resistance to the global corporate system, with campaigns that can look very similar wherever in the world they happen. And there is an equally important need to encourage the renewal of decentralized economic structures that are adapted to biological and cultural diversity, and that will look very different depending on local contexts. Together, resistance and renewal are the essence of localization.

Resistance requires international collaboration—even a certain degree of centralization—to protect society and the environment from the centralized global economic juggernaut. But the need for structures, treaties, and collaborations to protect ourselves from top-down structures does not mean we should create centralized top-down structures to impose “ecological measures” on diverse countries and ecosystems. We need, for example, worldwide protection from the tools of the corporate system, such as DDT, glyphosate, and asbestos—monocultural tools that have been imposed on ecosystems worldwide. On the other hand, it would be foolish to believe that

ecological and equitable “solutions” in food and farming can be imposed from above rather than arising from the local knowledge of communities themselves.

Localization means adaptation to the diversity of life. It is essential for our survival. The degree of localization or decentralization as an ultimate goal is an issue that needs democratic involvement and vigorous debate. In any case, reversing the effects of today’s global empire is a prerequisite for survival and for any hope of genuine democracy. (Decentralization/localization itself is not a guarantee, but a prerequisite for genuine democracy.)

Uncovering and renewing respect for traditional cultures would reveal that there are countless alternatives that are linked to the diversity of the living world. These localized knowledge systems—including new initiatives that are arising from the grassroots—are essential to set us back on track for evolution in the arms of Mother Gaia. It is only blind hubris that allows us to believe that we humans hold the Earth in our hands, or, even worse, can create a metaverse that is superior to life itself.

The global view needed to create a global citizens movement requires better cross-cultural communication and collaboration. Local Futures has been working for almost fifty years to foster this deeper dialogue. There is a major vision/information gap between land-based, less-industrialized communities on the one hand, and people in the urban industrialized parts of the world on the other. It is our experience that, paradoxically, most traditional peoples are highly vulnerable to the propaganda that rural communities are inferior to the shiny, clean, images of urban consumer culture. At the same time, some of the strongest resistance to corporate rule comes from people who have experienced the spiritual poverty of the consumer culture. In order to create bridges of communication, Local Futures has run “reality tours” in both directions.

Our work has consisted of books, films, web-based materials, workshops, and regional conferences, all with the goal of encouraging the formation of networks and alliances that bring people together to resist the monoculture while simultaneously building the community and ecological fabric essential for human and ecological well-being.

From many years’ experience in Ladakh and Bhutan, we became aware of the global economic system’s destructive impact on food and farming. Since the 1970s, we have been raising awareness

of the vital importance of protecting and renewing diversified, small-scale farms linked to local markets. We have carried the message of Via Campesina to urban audiences who were previously oblivious to their important message.

As part of this effort, we were the impetus behind the creation of the [International Forum on Globalisation](#) (IFG). At our “Future of Progress” conference in Stockholm in 1992, we brought together IFG funders and founding members from both North and South to highlight the effects of “free trade” and globalization on diverse cultures. At around the same time, we helped to co-found the [Global Ecovillage Network](#) and encouraged deeper collaboration between this originally Western initiative with villages and movements in the so-called Third World.

In 2011 we launched our film [The Economics of Happiness](#), which makes the case for a shift from global to local. The film not only describes the impacts of the global economic system, it also showcases the steps people are already taking worldwide to rebuild their local economies and communities. Translated into more than twenty-five languages, it has been used as an activist tool by grassroots groups on every continent. Building on the thousands of community screenings of the film, we launched an ongoing series of international Economics of Happiness conferences. To date, there have been twenty such conferences.

More recently, we set up the [International Alliance for Localisation](#), a network of people and groups committed to localization, and [World Localization Day](#), in which people across six continents organize events to celebrate the joy, beauty, and innovation of local economies and cultures.

This September, we convened a Planet Local Summit in Bristol UK. It was the biggest localization gathering ever, with cutting-edge thinkers, writers, policy makers, movement builders, and activists from five continents connecting over a clear vision to change the world.

About the Author



Helena Norberg-Hodge is a linguist, author, filmmaker, and pioneer of the new economy movement. She is the founder and director of Local Futures, and the convenor of World Localization Day and the Planet Local Summit. She is author of the *Ancient Futures*, and *Local is Our Future* and producer of the award-winning documentary *The Economics of Happiness* and of *Planet Local*. She is the founder of the International Alliance for Localisation, and a cofounder of the International Forum on Globalization and the Global Ecovillage Network. Helena is a recipient of the Alternative Nobel prize, the Arthur Morgan Award and the Goi Peace Prize.



DiEM25: Democracy in Europe and Beyond

Heikki Patomäki

Progressive forces are fragmented and often on the defensive. The idea of a “global citizen movement” has not caught on. National left parties have been in decline for decades, although “modernized” social democratic parties may in some countries still get an occasional minor election victory. However, these episodes have not changed the general direction of politics. The World Social Forum process seemed to offer hope, but turned out a failure. In many, if not most, contexts, neoliberalization continues and has become part of the taken-for-granted background, while countervailing deglobalization tendencies have also emerged. Especially since 2008/9, economic nationalism, securitization, and militarization have been on the rise.¹

It is not only economic uncertainty that can amplify existential insecurity and anxiety, triggering regressive learning, but also awareness of and concerns about the rather uncertain future (from pension insecurity to catastrophic climate change and artificial intelligence—not to speak of the specter of war). For the discontented masses, the remaining option seems to be that of populist identity politics. Instead of being motivated by hope for social and ecological progress, action is motivated by hatred of some X, which is allegedly responsible for the current problems. Whereas the basic populist antagonism faces off the “people” and the “elite,” the guilty others include refugees, immigrants, Islamists, Greens and leftists, political and cultural elites, and the “mainstream” media—or, as in El Salvador, criminals and gangsters born of poverty and insecurity.

It is difficult to make even a moderate and cautious turn towards a more social democratic and ecologically oriented direction unless there is a broad transnational or worldwide movement behind it.² In this regard, [DiEM25](#) (Democracy in Europe Movement 2025) can be seen as one of the few glimmers of hope. Established in early 2016 in the aftermath of the Euro crisis, DiEM25

has assumed many characteristics of a world party, thus offering valuable insights for the larger project. Although DiEM25 operates within the institutional framework of the EU, including the European Parliament, it can be seen as a testbed for cultivating transnational ethical and political consciousness, deploying new technologies for enabling widespread participation, overcoming legal obstacles to a supranational political party, and transcending identity-political fragmentation. Its roots lie in the contradictions of the European integration project, and more specifically in the Euro crisis of 2010–2015. Following the 2015 defeat of the Greek left-wing party Syriza in its struggle against the Troika (the International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank, and EU Commission), Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis resigned. Subsequent political meetings in France and Germany convinced him of the need for a new pan-European political movement to prevent a “descent into a post-modern 1930s.”

DiEM25's strategic aim is to convene a constitutional assembly that would reflect a genuine European democracy. Its original intention was to have a new draft constitution for the EU prepared by 2025 that, if adopted, would replace all existing European treaties. Beyond this process, the movement has striven to overcome austerity and harmful competition in Europe with concrete policy proposals, including ambitious green investment, a European anti-poverty plan, a pan-European universal basic income, and a common and humane migration policy. Rather than adhering to a single political ideology, DiEM25 is resolutely pluralistic, aiming to attract all, whether leftists, social democrats, Greens, or liberals.

In contrast to the authoritarian, nationalistic populisms that have been on the rise throughout Europe, DiEM25 exemplifies a form of democratic, transnational populism. Its concept of “we” is an imagined pan-European demos, not tied to the prevailing national imaginaries. DiEM25 inclusionary transnationalism manifests in the common front it is building for political activism. But it is also transnational in a second sense: its commitment to helping the most vulnerable people in the global political economy, especially refugees. The movement thus offers an alternative to Fortress Europe.

What is particularly interesting about DiEM25 is how it has experimented with new forms of direct participation in a truly transnational setting. In 2020, DiEM25 had allegedly more than 100,000 members in more than 195 countries and territories, but most of these were not real committed

members. Policies at all levels—local, regional, national, and pan-European—are approved in all-member votes. Even when a policy concerns a local or national issue, all members must approve it through an all-member vote. Each member has a unique password, and the voting is done electronically. Policy proposals can emerge from the Coordinating Collective (CC) or members. Proposals are put out to the membership for consultation and discussion and then subjected to an all-member vote. In typical all-member votes in 2022/23, only 1,000 to 2,000 members have participated.

In principle, DiEM25 combines participatory democracy with the capacity to adopt policies and programs, organize actions, and take part in elections. DiEM25 has so-called electoral wings, which are a tool of the movement to get involved in electoral politics and bring its program to the ballot box. Also in this sense, it is a political party. Despite such mobilization, DiEM25 has yet to become a high-profile actor in European politics. Its membership and budget remain small compared to those of the major national political parties, and the mainstream media largely ignore its activities and positions. Given this deficit, it was expected that DiEM25's success in the elections of the European Parliament in 2019 would be modest at best. DiEM25 got 1.4 million votes but no seats. Only the Greek electoral wing has won seats in the national parliament— which it lost in the 2023 elections.

The fate of DiEM25 depends on the dynamics of wider and deeper developments. DiEM25 has succeeded relatively well in deploying new technologies for enabling the participation of its members (though the relative absence of physical meetings seems an impediment), overcoming legal obstacles to a supranational political party, and perhaps transcending identity-political fragmentation at least among its limited membership. Similarly, a world party must encourage and facilitate its members to be directly involved in the processes of will-formation and decision-making. Yet, in the case of DiEM25, the high frequency of all-member votes (often on very complex issues and multifaceted programs) and its principles of rotation have not empowered large masses of citizens but rather led to a situation where the active membership consists of a fairly small number of people. This would seem to indicate that a world party should not demand too much from all of its members or citizens more generally but should allow for the possibility of division of labor.

Lack of media visibility and meager resources in the context dominated by the consequences of decades of neoliberalization—involving the rise of nationalism and politics of hatred since the 2000s—have prevented DiEM25 from becoming a major political force in Europe. In the haste of the moment when DiEM25 was launched, ten years must have seemed like a long time. However, the year 2025 is approaching rapidly, and the EU has neither disintegrated further nor become democratized or transformed otherwise in terms of the aspirations of DiEM25. Time is running out at least as far as the name of the movement is concerned.

Despite its shortcomings and failures, DiEM25 offers many valuable lessons for anyone interested in generating a global transformative movement and political party. DiEM25 has expanded the boundaries of practical-political possibilities and experimented with several new practices and procedures of transnational cooperation and participatory democracy.³

Endnotes

1. See my “Neoliberalism and Nationalist-Authoritarian Populism: Explaining Their Constitutive and Causal Connection,” *Protosociology. An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 37 (2021): 101–151.
2. I have analyzed this in some detail in “On the Future of the Left: A Global Perspective” in *Resetting the Left in Europe. Challenges, Attempts and Obstacles*, ed. Irina Ristić (Belgrade, Serbia: Institute of Social Sciences, 2021): 54–85, available at http://idn.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/RESETTING_THE_LEFT_IN_EUROPE.pdf.
3. The Progressive International alliance was formed in December 2018, when the Democracy in Europe Movement (DiEM25) and the Sanders Institute issued an open call to all progressive forces to form a common front. See <https://progressive.international/>.

About the Author



Heikki Patomäki is a social scientist, activist, and Professor of World Politics and Global Political Economy at the University of Helsinki. His research focuses on philosophy and methodology of social sciences, peace and futures studies, and global political economy, justice, and democracy. His most recent books include *World Statehood: The Future of World Politics*, *Debating the War in Ukraine: Counterfactual Histories and Future Possibilities*, and *The Three Fields of Global Political Economy*. He is a founding member of the new Helsinki Centre for Global Political Economy (Helsinki-GPE) and Vice Chair of the EuroMemo network for 2021–25.



Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature

Alessandro Pelizzon

The emergence of Nature (now mostly capitalized in the literature) as a subject of rights is now the subject of history, no longer of speculation. Since Christopher Stone popularized (if not outright introduced) the idea in 1972, Thomas Berry articulated it in quasi-metaphysical terms, Cormac Cullinan revived it in 2002, and Ecuador enshrined it within its 2008 Constitution, the idea has been successfully legislated and litigated hundreds of times in tens of countries. In fact, the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature's *Ecological Jurisprudence Tracker project* has identified, as of the beginning of 2023, more than 450 eco-jurisprudential initiatives across 42 jurisdictions (plus the international arena).

That the theory has now become praxis is undeniable. Equally undeniable is the transformative power of such an idea. Indeed, the United Nations has defined the emergence of an ecological jurisprudence (in particular, of rights of Nature initiatives) around the globe as the fastest-growing legal movement of the twenty-first century. The transformative possibilities the idea entails are both theoretical and practical. I will not dwell on the theoretical implications here, as this is not the appropriate place to do so, but as a short reflection on the practical implications, that means that they have the capacity to effect change either in the daily practices of individuals across the planet (be it because they are legally expected to change their behaviors or because they are inspired by the theoretical possibilities entailed by an emerging ecological jurisprudence) or in the very systems that enable such individual practices.

To support the emergence of such an idea, the [Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature](#) (GARN) was established in 2010 at the feet of the Tungurahua volcano in Ecuador. GARN is not a single entity, but rather a global network of organizations and individuals committed to the universal adoption and implementation of legal systems that recognize, respect, and enforce “rights of

Nature,” however they are articulated in different jurisdictions. As GARN’s site suggests, “rather than treating nature as property under the law, the time has come to recognize that natural communities have the right to exist, maintain and regenerate their vital cycles.” GARN members are a diverse network of scientists, attorneys, economists, indigenous leaders, authors, spiritual leaders, business leaders, politicians, actors, homemakers, students, and activists: people from all walks of life who are looking to transform our human relationship with our planet.¹

GARN’s work is organized around two fundamental axes: its “hubs” and the work of its “Rights of Nature tribunals.” The hubs are decentralized regional and thematic nodes designed to coordinate and support the activities of members within a particular issue, area, or region. These hubs are established and run by members who either work in a particular geographical area or who share particular characteristics or interests. The purpose of the hubs is to increase focused support and networking opportunities for the organizations, communities, and individuals working on Rights of Nature; build collaborations and create collective strategies for the recognition and implementation of the Rights of Nature in a region/theme/sector; provide support to local and regional efforts; respond to urgent needs and calls to action; and build visibility for key Rights of Nature efforts.

Among the thematic hubs are the Youth Hub (a space created by youth and for youth—defined as under 35 years old—from all over the world to empower youth to become ambassadors of the Rights of Nature movement, generate positive impact, and advocate successfully on behalf of the Rights of Nature and future generations), the Academic Hub (founded to harness the extensive and multidisciplinary scholarship that has developed, particularly over the last decade, around GARN’s core commitment to the support, adoption, and implementation of legal structures that respect and enforce Rights of Nature), and the Legal Hub. Among the geographic hubs are the European Hub, the Latin American Hub, and the African Hub. Additionally, recognizing the importance of Indigenous leadership and guidance for the growing rights of Nature movement, GARN members created an Indigenous Council as a platform for Indigenous leaders from around the globe to join together and have a leading voice in GARN.

The other main focus of GARN has been the establishment of [Rights of Nature tribunals](#), instances of popular adjudication designed to examine systemic Rights of Nature alternatives to the current

insufficient solutions and failed negotiations put forward by governing nation-states. These tribunals aim to create a forum for people from all around the world to speak on behalf of nature, to protest the destruction of the earth (destruction that is often sanctioned by governments and corporations), and to make recommendations about Earth's protection and restoration. The Tribunal also has a strong focus on enabling Indigenous Peoples to share their unique concerns and solutions about land, water, and culture with the global community. These tribunals have both a performative and exploratory function. While they lack any political or legal legitimacy, their primary function is to draw attention to particularly contentious issues via the enacted mechanism of a judicial-like procedure that is vested with the *auctoritas* of law's iconography. At the same time, they also provide a laboratory in which to discuss and workshop many of the ideas and solutions that distinct jurisdictions have put forward in their articulation of different rights of Nature solutions. Overall, these tribunals provide a framework for educating civil society and governments on the fundamental tenets of Rights of Nature, and an instrument for legal experts to examine constructs needed to more fully integrate Rights of Nature.

Finally, one of GARN's most recent developments has been the creation of an online repository of all existing eco-jurisprudential initiatives. The [Eco-jurisprudence Monitor](#) was launched at GARN's global gathering in Siena in 2022, with a comprehensive tracker articulated in the form of an interactive map that allows users to learn more about specific eco-jurisprudential initiatives around the planet. The Monitor is still expanding and aims to include a chorus of voices from the activists and architects of those initiatives, as well as an introductory library on these topics. Initially, the library was intended to be a comprehensive reference list of all scholarly (that is, peer-reviewed, thus excluding general news and media articles) publications in the field. However, while the number of scholarly publications in 2010 was below 10, the number is now well above 18,000 and growing. It is thus impossible to comprehensively categorize the growing literature in a single place.

This growth of scholarly literature, however, far from being daunting, is a great testimony of the incredible interest the world is showing in this idea. To paraphrase Victor Hugo, it truly seems that the idea of Nature as a legal subject (rather than a legal object) is an idea whose time has truly come.

Endnotes

1. The functioning of GARN as a complex and interconnected network of distinct entities and organizations has been thoroughly mapped by Pamela Martin and Craig Kauffman in *The Politics of the Rights of Nature: Strategies for Building a More Sustainable Future* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021).

About the Author



Alessandro Pelizzon is a co-founder and an Executive Committee Member of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature, a member of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network, and an Associate Professor in the School of Law and Society at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Australia. His research focusses on the emerging discourse on rights of nature, Wild Law, and Earth Jurisprudence. His latest book is *Ecological Jurisprudence: Law, Representation and Environmental Metaphysics*. He holds an LLM from the University of Turin.



Transnational Institute of Social Ecology: Transformation from Below

Yavor Tarinski

As Greece and other parts of the world are once again engulfed by wildfires, while almost each day a new heat record is reached, an increasing number of people are realizing that the effects of climate change are here and are changing the face of our localities, while years of neoliberal policies have left preventive public services underfunded and ill-equipped for the disaster periods to come. It is also becoming crystal clear that there seems to be no plan to stop the forthcoming catastrophe.¹

Of course, we must not be surprised by the failed attempts of global elites to successfully challenge the climate crisis. The results of the COP climate summits so far, and predictably of those to come, have been and will continue to be deadly inefficient because these are meeting spaces for the top echelons of the world. And the decisions that must be made in order to avoid climate catastrophe concern drastic measures towards degrowth and overturning the power discrepancies that allow the very existence of elites—in other words, nothing short of radical social change. Those who attend the COP summits, as part of the world elites, have no interest in such a perspective, and prefer instead the cosmetic measures that do not endanger the continuation of business-as-usual. Only the common people, those who already suffer the consequences of the growth-infused climate change, have the interest and will to make the hard decisions necessary to avert the upcoming catastrophe. That is why social ecologists have always insisted that ecological solutions require direct-democratic means.

Where can people meet each other and seek collective and pragmatic solutions to an existential problem that puts in danger their livelihoods? Some may propose the scale of the nation-state, but as C.L.R. James, one of the greatest anticolonial thinkers of the twentieth century, said, a

radical, essentially revolutionary, social change cannot be achieved on the national level. More specifically, according to him, the national quality of the state must be destroyed; that is to say, the revolution must be an international one.² This corresponds especially to the approach needed for successfully tackling climate change, as both for-profit capitalist globalization and nation-centered statecraft tend to divide people. The natural world does not recognize borders, be they based on national belonging or on class position. Thus, its preservation requires their abolition, something that will necessitate the replacement of current institutions with new ones that will allow for the emergence of a genuine public space open to all. As C.L.R. James suggests, no one can know for sure what the new institutions will look like, but we can inform our visions from the highest peaks of the past as a guide. For James, these were the institutional forms of the public assembly and the council of delegates, such as those that have manifested amid popular uprisings. These seem like more suitable political forms for our crisis-ridden age.

The creation of local ecology councils, transnationally interconnected with each other, could be an immensely important step towards developing sustainable answers to climate change. This is not some far-fetched proposal coming from nowhere, but a very real strategic approach implemented in different parts of Mesopotamia, where the environmental movements have been feverishly nurturing the emergence of the grassroots institution of the ecology council for the preservation of communal livelihoods.³

Mesopotamian groups sought to advance a structural alternative to the ongoing environmental degradation in Northern Kurdistan, rather than continue on the path of single-issue campaigns. Thus, they offered us a glimpse into how a really democratic dual power can be established that seeks to open real public space where all members of a given locality can participate, and then to connect such spaces for decisions to be taken for the translocal level. It must also be noted that the ecology councils in Mesopotamia were developed with the scope of belonging to all of the social base, rather than being a hub for ideological sectarianism—something that might shock activists in other parts of the world. But we must always bear in mind that the only way to politicize a population and instill in it a passion for democratic participation is to give it space to self-organize and self-emancipate. This is exactly what has been happening for some years now in different parts of Kurdistan, with the most notable case being that of Rojava.

Such strategy derives from the understanding that those who live close to the land, and not elites hidden in their remote offices, have the most intimate experiences with local natural systems, but also from their recognition that the problems that plague each locality are interconnected. This implies a radical alteration of the way our societies are governed, shifting decision-making power away from elites and towards the grassroots. We cannot expect anything of essence from heads of states or capitalist interests. Our hope lies in each other and in the grassroots worldwide. This is what we should advocate for and nurture whenever we see it emerging from popular action.

We at the [Transnational Institute of Social Ecology](#) (TRISE), a decentralized and democratically run network of activists and scholars from Europe and beyond, have been working on researching and developing this approach. Through conferences, seminars, and publications, we have been trying to shed light on the alternative structures that are being set up in different parts of Kurdistan, as well as in other parts of the world. For us, this approach is in line with the strategy of libertarian municipalism that was advanced by Murray Bookchin and other social ecologists: the potential of local communities in movement to develop their own institutions of self-governance in parallel and in antagonism to those of the State and capitalist market. TRISE's structure has been advocating the overcoming of national separation, insisting instead on transnational forms of cooperation and networking, inspired by Abdullah Öcalan's project of Democratic Confederalism.

Endnotes

1. George Monbiot, "After the Failure of Cop26, There's Only One Last Hope for Survival," *The Guardian*, November 14, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/14/cop26-last-hope-survival-climate-civil-disobedience>; Mark Maslin, Priti Parikh, Richard Taylor, and Simon Chin-Yee, "COP27 Will Be Remembered as a Failure—Here's What Went Wrong," *The Conversation*, November 21, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/cop27-will-be-remembered-as-a-failure-heres-what-went-wrong-194982>.
2. C.L.R. James, "World Revolution: 1968," *Speak Out* (June – July 1968), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1968/world-revolution.htm>.
3. Ercan Ayboğa, "Strengthening the Change in Ecological Awareness!," *Cooperation in Mesopotamia*, August 2015, <https://mesopotamia.coop/strengthening-the-change-in-ecological-awareness/>. The term "Mesopotamia" is used here to refer to the region between the Tigrates and Euphrates Rivers spanning contemporary Syria, Iraq, and parts of Turkey, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in a way not bound to the particulars of national identity.

About the Author



Yavor Tarinski is an independent researcher, activist, and author. He is on the administrative board of the Transnational Institute of Social Ecology and the editorial board of the Greek digital journal *Aftoleksi*, and serves as the bibliographer at Agora International. His books include *Reclaiming Cities: Revolutionary Dimensions of Political Participation* and *Concepts for Democratic and Ecological Society*.



Institute for Social Ecology: Reclaiming Utopianism

Brian Tokar

Since its founding nearly fifty years ago in 1974, the [Institute for Social Ecology](#) has been an international educational and activist organization operating in collaboration with, and in direct service to, a wide array of social movements. The Institute has worked to advance the political and philosophical outlook first developed by our co-founder Murray Bookchin and colleagues beginning in the 1960s, and to provide a hub for successive generations of movement activists to deepen their theoretical understanding, strengthen inter- and intra-movement networks, and develop practical skills ranging from community organizing to permaculture and green urban design.

Social ecology has long argued for the fundamental inseparability of ecological and social problems and solutions, and was among the earliest outlooks to identify the growth imperative of capitalism as the systemic underlying basis of today's widespread threats to the integrity of living ecosystems and human communities alike. Social ecology examines how the myth of human domination of nature emerged from rising relationships of domination among people following the breakdown of ancient tribal societies, particularly in Europe and the Middle East. Its philosophical inquiry examines the emergence of human consciousness from within the processes of natural evolution, exploring how evolutionary processes may have seeded the origins of human creativity and freedom. Seeking a political outlook that is most consistent with those human attributes, social ecologists advocate for a communalist politics that is rooted in horizontalism, direct democracy, and confederal relationships between liberated cities, towns, and neighborhoods. ISE co-founder Dan Chodorkoff has striven to reclaim the utopian tradition in Western thought and argues for a "practical utopianism" embracing advanced principles from

green building and urban redesign, together with eco-technologies to produce food, energy, and other necessities.¹

With these principles in mind, the Institute has brought together activists from the antinuclear and alternative technology movements of the 1970s/80s, leading thinkers and writers on ecofeminism, proponents of the community-centered, grassroots dimensions of early Green politics, key organizers from the global justice/alterglobalization movement of the 1990s/early 2000s, and some of the most committed participants in Occupy Wall Street as well as its various US and international offshoots. The ISE has worked in close partnership with Puerto Rican urban homesteaders in New York City, Indigenous activists and thinkers from the Akwesasne Mohawk community and elsewhere, local democracy advocates from Greece and the Scandinavian countries, Kurdish exiles from the Middle East and, most recently, activists from the James and Grace Lee Boggs Center in Detroit.²

We worked with people from across New England to bring the issue of GMO contamination of our foods and agricultural crops to our local Town Meetings—one of the longest-thriving institutions of direct democracy in the world today—and allied with international advocates from around the world to challenge the huge international conventions of the North American biotechnology lobby throughout the decade of the 2000s. We have participated in international actions and forums to highlight the outlook of climate justice for more than fifteen years, and have also featured the accomplishments of Kurdish activists, who have been developing their own theory of democratic confederalism in liberated zones inside war-torn northern Syria. Several recent efforts have focused on reinforcing our long-standing commitment to global environmental and racial justice.³

Just prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic, young social ecologists and allies from across the US, Canada, and Mexico convened the first North American Congress of Municipal Movements in the city of Detroit, which served as the founding convention of an ongoing federation of grassroots organizations known as [Symbiosis](#). And since the spread of the pandemic, cohorts from activist collectives in the Philippines, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, and many other places have participated in our online classes, significantly enhancing the Institute's international character. As our fiftieth anniversary approaches, we are confident as ever that social ecology will continue to inform and inspire social movements from around the world for decades to come.

Endnotes

1. Dan Chokordoff, *The Anthropology of Utopia* (Porsgrunn, Norway: New Compass Press, 2014)
2. Eirik Eiglad, ed., *Social Ecology and Social Change* (Porsgrunn, Norway: New Compass Press, 2015)
3. A variety of perspectives on social ecology and anti-racism are profiled in the Winter 2022–23 issue of our journal *Harbinger*, at <https://harbinger-journal.com/>. For video footage from our Summer 2022 event in collaboration with Cooperation Jackson and others, see <https://social-ecology.org/wp/2022/09/summer-gathering-videos/>.

About the Author



Brian Tokar is an activist and author, a lecturer in Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont, and board member of 350 Vermont and the Institute for Social Ecology. He is the author of *The Green Alternative*, *Earth for Sale*, and *Toward Climate Justice: Perspectives on the Climate Crisis and Social Change*. He is also the co-editor of *Agriculture and Food in Crisis, Redesigning Life?*, *Gene Traders*, and *Climate Justice and Community Renewal: Resistance and Grassroots Solutions*. He holds an MA in biophysics from Harvard University.



WEALL: Wellbeing Economy Alliance

Stewart Wallis

The [Wellbeing Economy Alliance](#) (WEAll) is a leading collaboration of organizations, alliances, movements, and individuals working towards economic systems change. Our vision is for societies around the world to redesign all economic activities, rules, and incentives to ensure shared wellbeing for all people and the planet by 2040. Our mission is to change the debate around economic development and create momentum for systems-wide transformation through radical collaboration at the local, national, and global levels.

WEAll is doing this by

- **Supporting and connecting people and organizations** around the world who are working with alternative economic models and practices that together have the power to change the current global economic system;
- **Co-creating and sharing resources** that show a Wellbeing Economy approach, i.e., an economy designed to deliver quality of life and flourishing for all people, in harmony with our environment, is possible and that there are several solutions already being implemented around the world; and
- **Challenging our cultural narratives and ways of thinking** about our economic futures, mobilizing millions of people to take action at the individual, community, and systemic levels.

Progress in the Five Years since WEAll's Creation

Since launching five years ago, we have built our global membership to over [400 organizations](#), movements, and coalitions. We launched [hubs](#) in Scotland, New Zealand, Canada, Wales,

California, Ireland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Iberia, Brazil, and Argentina, with fifteen more hubs forming in other countries and US States. We catalyzed and launched the Wellbeing Economy Governments ([WEGo](#)) partnership, consisting of New Zealand, Iceland, Scotland, Finland, Wales, and Canada—and growing. This initiative is strongly supported by the Prime Ministers and First Ministers of these countries.

We have been able to popularize the concept of a Wellbeing Economy in the ensuing years. We played a key role in moving the concept of a Wellbeing Economic System into the mainstream with many other governments and international organizations—including the EU, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Australia, and the World Health Organization—actively considering it and promoting it. We successfully promoted the idea of a Wellbeing Economy in both the mainstream media and social media around the World and through presentations to a huge range of audiences and a speakers bureau of over 90 spokespeople and ambassadors.

We co-created guides to support new power bases pushing for a wellbeing economy: [policy design](#) (launched in March 2021), narrative (launched December 2020), and [business](#) (launched Jan 2020), and we co-created, with the over 120 WEAll academic members, over 20 [briefing papers](#) on different aspects of the wellbeing economy. We built the [WEAll Citizens online platform](#) and enabled the first 3,000 global citizens to connect to the global movement. Finally, we understand the importance of collaboration for our work and have begun building strategic partnerships with organizations in other global movements, for instance climate change, biodiversity, feminism, democracy and rights, unions, health, social justice, and interfaith dialogue.

Next Steps and Comments

We have revised our [2040 strategy](#) to put a much greater focus on an ecocentric and postcolonial approach, including setting out how we plan to transform WEAll into a truly global network.

We are focused on radical collaboration around shared goals and values rather than agreement around specific policies. We are not doctrinal about the destination being described as a Wellbeing Economy and work very closely with organizations and movements promoting destinations such as regenerative economies, doughnut economies, postgrowth, and Ubuntu.

For us, the economic system is *Oikos Nomos*—how we manage our planetary household and how we live both with our fellow humans and with all life. Therefore, economic transformation requires a values shift and a transformation to an ecological civilization. As such, we are now reaching out and linking to organizations and movements in such areas as the inner development goals (i.e., personal development as a critical element in societal change), indigenous rights, unitive narrative (i.e., one that recognizes our fundamental interconnectedness with the whole community of our planet and universe), and spiritual transformation.

About the Author



Stewart Wallis is a co-founder of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) and the co-author of *A Finer Future*. He is the previous executive director of the New Economics Foundation (nef) and International Director of Oxfam GB. Prior to this, he spent seven years with the World Bank working on industrial and financial development in East Asia and thirteen years working in business. He holds Master's degrees from the University of Cambridge and the University of London and an honorary doctorate from Lancaster University.



The Bahá'í Experience: Religious Community and Social Change

Selvi Adaikkalam Zabihi

The future we build will be shaped by the myriad constructive and destructive forces playing out in the world today. How can greater synergy among transformative movements be fostered to reach the critical momentum needed to shift course away from a looming dystopia?

Toward this end, I offer insights drawn from the experience of the [worldwide Bahá'í community](#), which has, for over a century and a half, been consciously seeking to advance the transition toward a more mature global civilization. Through a diversity of actions pursued within a coherent framework, the Bahá'í movement has generated a rich body of insight that is relevant to the questions we are considering in this forum.

To provide some background, the Bahá'í response to the needs of our time was set in motion by the spiritual and social teachings of Baha'u'llah, who was a prisoner of the Persian and Ottoman empires from 1853 until his death in 1892. Baha'u'llah articulated a vision of humanity struggling through a tumultuous transition toward a more mature global order, based on a recognition of our organic interdependence and a complete reconceptualization of our relationships with one another and with the earth.

"The winds of despair," he wrote, "are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective... Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead... The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

In response to Baha'u'llah's teachings, the Bahá'í community has been steadily advancing a movement that now spans the globe—reaching from metropolitan centers to remote villages, and comprising a microcosm of humanity. We see our efforts as part of a wider movement of movements, all contributing in distinct and complementary ways to the emergence of a future in which every individual and social group can flourish, in harmony with nature, and human diversity can be recognized as the ultimate source of our shared prosperity.

Thus, Bahá'ís collaborate with like-minded efforts as an important part of our work. At the same time, we are learning, within a shared framework, how to pursue complex, dynamic, synergistic processes of social change. Insights generated in this way might shed light on the question of how to advance a wider movement of movements.

The Bahá'í approach to social transformation includes a commitment to coherence between the means and ends of change, because the means of every movement prefigure its ends. The ends sought by Bahá'ís are a peaceful and sustainable global civilization that embodies the principle of the organic oneness of humanity in all its diversity, and is organized according to the principle of justice. Bahá'ís therefore adopt unifying, just, and constructive means that seek to release the creative society-building powers of the human spirit. Some commentators have described this as a strategy of “radical constructive agency” focused simultaneously on the transformation of individual hearts and minds, the development of entirely new patterns of community life, and the construction of novel institutional structures.¹

To advance these processes, our community has developed systematic training materials that foster creative initiative within a shared framework for action.² This framework includes cultivating the spiritual and intellectual empowerment of young people in their earliest formative ages so that they learn to see themselves as protagonists of change, nurturing the capacities of older youth and adults and channeling those capacities toward community-building endeavors, stimulating grassroots social action directed at the social and material needs of communities, and contributing to prevalent discourses of society, in order to help lay the spiritual and intellectual foundations for an entirely new social order.

Concretely, this includes grassroots group activities for education, empowerment, and community-building in several thousand localities all over the globe, involving children, youth, and adults. It

includes initiatives of mutual aid in areas like health, agriculture, environment, education, women's advancement, and overcoming societal divisions based on spurious distinctions such as race and caste.³ Some of these are simple projects, and others are more complex and established. In all these activities, beyond the immediate benefit to communities, Bahá'ís are focused on capacity building for all at the individual, institutional, and community levels. At the level of thought and discourse, the Bahá'í community engages at local, regional, national, and international levels on issues such as global governance, climate, the education of women, and more.⁴

All of this is approached within a culture of learning characterized by cycles of action, reflection, and consultation, unfolding within a wider framework of global plans.⁵ Bahá'ís do not pretend to have all the solutions to the problems facing humanity. Rather, we seek to learn our way forward by applying first principles to the systematic generation, application, and diffusion of knowledge about social transformation. We do this by generating context-sensitive insights at the local level, distilling universal patterns from some of these insights through a global structure of organized learning, and disseminating those universal insights back to the grassroots—all in a bidirectional process that respects diversity and fosters decentralization.

The relevance of this experience to our questions about movement-building across the ecology of movements has to do with growing abilities to share learning and coordinate efforts across many types of action and across geographic and cultural diversity; to apply transferable forms of learning in context-specific ways; to understand one set of efforts as distinct from, but related to and contributing to, other kinds of efforts; to learn through action-reflection cycles about all of these things; to create institutions that support the specific requirements of these processes; and more. If the experience of the Bahá'í community can contribute any insights to the conversation at hand, we are happy to offer these with due humility, and with full appreciation for the insights we can also gain from others.

Endnotes

1. Michael Karlberg and Derik Smith, "Responding to Injustice with Constructive Agency," in *The World of the Bahá'í Faith*, ed. Robert Stockman (New York: Routledge, 2022), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c wd6MW-f66zq4-B55Qm0SDwlpQLxAa3Q/view>.
2. The Ruhi Institute, "Statement of Purpose and Methods," accessed July 15, 2023, <https://www.ruhi.org/en/statement-of-purpose-and-methods/>.
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5. Michael Karlberg and Todd Smith, "A Culture of Learning," in *The World of the Bahá'í Faith*, ed. Robert Stockman (New York: Routledge, 2022), https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BnsSqDQrapRbLtiFv9UW6NU_PCoUHjDT/view.

About the Author



Selvi Adaikkalam Zabihi is the Economic Justice Officer at the US Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs and has taught courses on inequality at Western Washington University and Whatcom Community College.